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Benjamin Baumann

## **On Centrism and Dualism**

A Critical Reassessment of Structural Anthropology's  
Contribution to the Study of Southeast Asian Societies

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## I. INTRODUCTION

“Now the model being an artefact, it is possible to understand how it is made and this understanding of the method of construction adds a supplementary dimension.” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1966: 24)

The principal aim of this paper is to discuss ERRINGTON’S anthropological model<sup>1</sup> of social organization in Southeast Asia and highlight its relation to Structural Anthropology’s theoretical premises. I argue that a discussion of ERRINGTON’S model is necessary, because there exists no detailed analysis of her comparative approach to this day. This is all the more remarkable since ERRINGTON’S model features prominently in discussions of Southeast Asian forms of social organization (cf. CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995; HARDENBERG 2007; RÖSSLER 1998). This lack of a detailed discussion might be due to the fact that ERRINGTON’S model is theoretically dense and that it alludes to the rather ‘complicated’ anthropological field of kinship studies.

This paper sets out to question the heuristic value of ERRINGTON’S model by tracing her argument’s genealogy, highlighting its epistemological characteristics and distinguishing features. My discussion of ERRINGTON’S model will rest on theoretical premises that will be outlined in chapter II.1.1.1.. I then move on to discuss two analytic concepts that I have identified as the backbone of her comparative approach. Both of these concepts are closely associated with the structuralism of Claude LÉVI-STRAUSS, and I argue that an understanding of ERRINGTON’S model presupposes a preliminary investigation of these concepts and their place in LÉVI-STRAUSS’ anthropological perspective, commonly labeled structuralism or Structural Anthropology.

The discussion of ERRINGTON’S model will start with an exploration of the concept of transformation and its relevance for structural analysis in general. The epistemological significance of identifying transformations, especially regarding the comparative dimension of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ structuralism will be discussed by means of his structural study of myth and his ‘elementary’ model of kinship and exchange.

With reference to Edmund LEACH’S (1967, 1976) assessment of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ technique of myth interpretation, I will highlight the essentiality ascribed to the concept of transformation

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<sup>1</sup> I perceive a model to be a theoretical construct that tries to represent reality with a set of abstractions and a set of logical and quantitative relationships between these abstractions (cf. GEERTZ 1973: 93). “In a more rigorous sense, to identify the elements and characteristics of a system is to create a model, a limited isomorphism that describes certain significant properties of a phenomenon.” (WINTHROP 1991: 290)

for the structural analysis of myth. Following this, I will explore the context of kinship and exchange with reference to Paula RUBEL'S and Abraham ROSMAN'S (RUBEL/ROSMAN 1978) adoption of LÉVI-STRAUSS' model in their comparative approach to Melanesian societies. I will argue that it is the concept of transformation that represents the essential aspect of their comparison, since it relates the diverse Melanesian societies structurally.

In both contexts I will try to explicate the epistemological premises that the concept of transformation implies when it is conceived in its structuralist sense. In addition to my discussion of these two contexts I will introduce general ideas of the structuralist paradigm<sup>2</sup> as well as basic categories of kinship studies which will be used throughout this paper.

The second major concept of ERRINGTON'S comparative model is the House<sup>3</sup>, conceived as an analytic category. ERRINGTON'S conception of the 'house' evidently derives from LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept of *sociétés à maison*, or *house societies*<sup>4</sup> (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987: 151-197). LÉVI-STRAUSS' conception of *house societies* represents his theoretical attempt to move beyond the limitations that conventional categories of kinship analysis<sup>5</sup> have imposed on the anthropological study of cognatic<sup>6</sup> societies. Furthermore, it also represents an early attempt to reconcile indigenous conceptions with anthropological classification (cf. LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982).

I will show that ERRINGTON'S entire model rests on LÉVI-STRAUSS' concepts, and on her premise to classify island Southeast Asian social formations as Houses. Furthermore, I will argue that it is the commonly shared assumption that these social formations are not analyzable on grounds of traditional categories of kinship studies<sup>7</sup> that has driven ERRINGTON in her attempt to re-typify island Southeast Asian societies. Her entire model rests on the premise that Houses represent the focus of social organization in Southeast Asia and thus

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<sup>2</sup> The word paradigm refers to a set of common assumptions, shared by members of a particular scientific community (cf. BARNARD/SPENCER 1996: 616).

<sup>3</sup> The capitalized 'House' refers to ERRINGTON'S conception of the 'house' as a word denoting both a dwelling and a society's major type of grouping.

<sup>4</sup> Because house is a common word with many referents, it has become difficult to distinguish the house as defined by LÉVI-STRAUSS and other scholars, as a specific social configuration, from its meaning as a dwelling or residual structure. The italicized *house* will be used to differentiate the specific social configuration in the sense of LÉVI-STRAUSS, from the capitalized House of ERRINGTON, and the house understood as a dwelling or as an accumulation of symbolic representations as perceived by other authors, such as CARSTEN and HUGH-JONES (1995). In addition LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept of *sociétés à maison*, which is variously and ambiguously translated, will be referred to as *house societies*.

<sup>5</sup> e.g. unilineal descent, descent/affinity, endogamy/exogamy, matrilineity/patrilineity, uxori-/virilocality etc.

<sup>6</sup> Cognation designates the tracing of a person's descent through both parents indifferently.

<sup>7</sup> Southeast Asian societies frequently seem to transcend the structural oppositions which are used to define traditional kinship categories and render them mutually exclusive.



constitute the common theme that renders the structural comparison of Southeast Asian societies possible.

Even though LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept of *house* society has already been reviewed extensively, I argue that its exploration is nevertheless fundamental in order to understand ERRINGTON'S model. Furthermore, it represents an appropriate medium with which to trace general developments in kinship studies. I will, therefore, affirm how LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept is characterized by Susan GILLESPIE (GILLESPIE 2000a, 2000b), and further explore how the basic premises of his concept have been restated and how they are handled by authors dealing with Southeast Asian societies.

Accordingly, two broad streams of application are traceable. The proponents of the first stream, characterized as 'the heuristic approach' (HARDENBERG 2007: 162), highlight the heuristic value of LÉVI-STRAUSS' proposition. Whereas the proponents of the second stream, to which I will refer as 'the typological approach', are mainly concerned with the theoretical question of whether LÉVI-STRAUSS' *house* societies represent an analytic 'type' of society to be added alongside more familiar 'types'<sup>8</sup> and hence whether it represents a useful analytic category for anthropological classifications.

Afterwards, I will explore one of the most contested yet, as I will argue, most important premises of LÉVI-STRAUSS original conception of *houses*: the idea of hierarchy.

LÉVI-STRAUSS identifies hierarchy as an essential organizing feature of *house* societies. In this context I will review Stephen HEADLEY'S (1987) utilization of LÉVI-STRAUSS' emphasis on hierarchy. This will be done with reference to the former's conclusion to the collection of papers entitled *De la hutte au palais: sociétés "à maison" en Asie du Sud-Est insulaire* (MACDONALD 1987). This edited volume represents one of the first systematic applications of LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept of *house* societies to societies of island Southeast Asia. I will show that HEADLEY'S most important insight is his discovery that contrasting conceptions of *houses* might exist within a single socio-political system. He concludes that the conceptions of rulers tend to stress hierarchy, whereas the peasants' stress 'equality'. He describes Southeast Asian peasants as conceiving their entire village communities as extended households. Thereby, the *house* appears in its fetishized form, becoming a metaphor for the entire society whose unity is imagined and expressed via the idiom of siblingship. Accordingly, the discussion of

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<sup>8</sup> For example societies that were termed 'differentiated' and 'undifferentiated', whereas the first 'type' is associated with unilineal and the second with cognatic descent (cf. HOWELL 1995: 149-151, 2003: 17-18).

HEADLEY'S argument introduces siblingship as the essential concept for imagining and expressing unity in Southeast Asia.

I will show that it is the valuation of unity that also represent the fundamental idea of ERRINGTON'S comparative model. In her model the universal valuation of siblingship, its role in imagining unity, and its relevance for establishing houses as ritual centers, constitutes the common theme of viewing Southeast Asian social formation as Houses. In this context I will highlight the importance of siblingship as a heuristic category for the analysis of island Southeast Asian social formations.

For a long time siblingship has been neglected in the anthropology of Southeast Asia. Jeremy KEMP and Frans HÜSKEN (1991) claim that anthropologists working on Southeast Asia have contributed two important themes to the general anthropological discourse, both are to be found in the realm of kinship studies. Firstly, they refer to the analysis of what is known as asymmetric marriage alliance<sup>9</sup>. Secondly, they highlight the rather blurred category of cognatic societies, or cognatic kinship systems.

Of the two, the former achieved early prominence due to anthropology's general emphasis on unilineal descent<sup>10</sup> (ibid.: 1).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, cognatic systems were analytically neglected, if not totally ignored. Even today cognatic systems do not receive the attention that one might legitimately assume to be their due, given their demographic preponderance (the majority of Southeast Asia's population is living in cognatic societies) (ibid.). These two analytic concepts, which emphasize affinity and cognation respectively, are intended to describe the

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<sup>9</sup> Asymmetric alliance describes systems in which women move asymmetrically between hierarchically differentiated alliance groups, so that Ego's group takes women from a different group than the one it gives them to, which implies a minimum of three exchange groups. These exchange groups are generally understood as unilineal descent groups, a principle of descent that stresses either the male or female side (cf. NEEDHAM 1979: 36-37).

<sup>10</sup> In traditional kinship theory the relation between parent and child is understood as ties of filiation, sometimes specified further as patrification or matrification. Filiation links are repeated generation after generation, and if the social emphasis is on the whole series of such links then one talks of descent. Very often, links traced through one parent are emphasized at the expense, relatively or absolutely, of those through the other. If links through the father are emphasized, there is patrilineal or agnatic descent; if the mother represents the focus of linkage, then there is matrilineal or uterine descent. In both cases, descent is unilineal, the descent line formed by these links being traced back in time through persons of the same sex to the ancestor or founder of the line (PARKIN 1997: 15). Groups that recruit their members according to unilineal principles are therefore called, unilineal descent groups. For a detailed account of the anthropological concept of descent group, see DUMONT (2006 [1971]). The study of social structure represents the main focus of British social anthropology during the 1940s and 50s. British social anthropologists, mainly working on Africa, were concerned with the analysis of the political organization in societies lacking centralized political institutions. The theory of unilineal descent groups dominated these investigations, as exemplified in Meyer FORTES (1953) article *The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups*. This anthropological perspective is also known as descent theory. For an apt summary of how the relationship between British anthropologists and descent theory evolved see BERGER (2000: 38-43).

<sup>11</sup> An example of this prominence in the context of island Southeast Asia is J.P.B. DE JOSSELYN DE JONG'S (1977 [1935]) so called 'Field of Ethnological Study' (FES), that deals exclusively with unilineal societies practicing asymmetric marriage alliance.

two elementary strategies for imagining social unity: alliance and siblingship, two social principles that are commonly considered to be structurally at odds with one another (cf. GILLESPIE 2000b: 43).

ERRINGTON'S model is one of the few scholarly attempts to reconcile these two major strategies of establishing unity and the attached differentiation of the sexes into husband/wife and brother/sister. Her model rests on positing a major structural transformation separating island Southeast Asian societies. Accordingly, the two strategies of establishing unity – affinity and cognation – are expressed in and constituted by two major variations in the marriage-cum-political systems of the region. By introducing 'Eastern Indonesia'<sup>12</sup> – marked by asymmetric alliance – and the 'Centrist Archipelago'<sup>13</sup> – marked by cognatic kinship – as analytic categories, ERRINGTON'S model rests on an idiosyncratic typology that differentiates island Southeast Asian societies on the basis of socio-cultural strategies of establishing social unity.

The first 'type' of society is well known in anthropological literature, whereby the chosen term conveys a rather geographical connotation. ERRINGTON claims that many 'Eastern Indonesian' societies consider themselves as having descended from a single ancestral point of origin that fractured long ago. Accordingly, these societies tend to represent themselves as irremediably fractured into pairs. Especially their symbolic, ritual, and social life is said to be saturated with dualisms at every level. Socially speaking, the 'Eastern Indonesian' societies consist of Houses, and each House is related to other Houses in continuing exchange relations as wife-givers or as wife-takers. In addition, basic dual oppositions like right and left, male and female, husband and wife, heaven and earth, and black and white are used frequently and quite elaborated in a variety of socio-cultural contexts, ranging from house designs to funeral ceremonies.

The 'Centrist Archipelago' is a similar conceptual space that includes the former 'Indic States' of Java and Bali, but also a number of shifting agriculturalists and hunter-gatherers who are found, for the most part, on the swathe of islands on the rim of mainland Southeast Asia. According to ERRINGTON'S characterization, 'Centrist' societies are preoccupied with unity and view fracture and divisiveness as either the result or the cause, or both, of personal illness, community misfortune, or political failure. Thus, 'Indic States' represent themselves

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<sup>12</sup> In her later publications ERRINGTON changes the term. 'Eastern Indonesia' becomes the 'Exchange Archipelago' (cf. ERRINGTON 1990: 54), but since this paper is concerned with her two major publications on this topic (1987, 1989) I will use the term employed therein.

<sup>13</sup> Neither term is in general use.

historically with images that stress oneness: as mountains, stable and round; as umbrellas, round and shading; or as banyan trees,<sup>14</sup> rooted, protecting and overarching. ‘Centrist’ societies are said to regard men and women qualitatively as very much the same sort of creature: as descendants from a common ancestral source. ‘Centrist’ societies are said to stress the unity of the sexes as brothers and sisters and not their difference as man/woman or husband/wife.

ERRINGTON argues that the multiple permutations that express these basic ideas of social organization in a variety of contexts may give the impression of noncomparability. Yet, she claims that a House-centric perspective will reveal that most island Southeast Asian societies can be viewed as transformations of each other and that they are, thus, comparable.

In my discussion of ERRINGTON’S comparative model I will concentrate on those aspects of her model that are said to constitute its characteristic features: houses, siblingship, and marriage (cf. CARSTEN 1995a: 122). While exploring these contexts it became evident that the relationships hierarchy/seniority and complementarity/siblingship are crucial elements for a proper understanding of her model. Therefore these central relations will be introduced in some detail.

My exploration of ERRINGTON’S comparative approach aims at identifying and summarizing her model’s theoretical premises. At the same time I am intending to highlight the symbolic significance of cross-sex siblingship for island Southeast Asian societies. My in-depth discussion of cross-sex siblingship aims at understanding how the House’s unity is imagined and expressed in ERRINGTON’S model. Furthermore I want to stress that ERRINGTON’S major contribution to the anthropology of Southeast Asia lies in her attempt to highlight the relevance of these cognatic cross-sex relations. Concluding I will argue that the idea of unity, imagined via cross-sex siblingship, represents common theme in ERRINGTON’S model, that unites ‘Centrist’ and ‘Eastern Indonesian’ societies structurally and identifies them as transformations of each other.

In the concluding chapter I will discuss some other theoretical concepts that also seem to be of relevance for ERRINGTON’S characterization of island Southeast Asian societies, without being explained by her explicitly. Furthermore, I will affirm some already stated criticism made by various scholars pertaining to ERRINGTON’S heuristic perspective. My final discussion will add some further points to this already existing corpus of criticism. Thereby, I will concentrate on her comparative approach and her conception of ‘Centrist’ societies, an

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<sup>14</sup> *Ficus benghalensis*

analytic category that has not been scrutinized so far. I will conclude the discussion with an explication of my understanding of ERRINGTON'S argument and an attempt to reformulate her central thesis. In my argumentation I will refer to the theoretical premises outlined in chapter II.1.1.1.. thereby trying to validate my interpretation with the arguments of other anthropologists discussing social organization in Island Southeast Asia. I will stress that, despite the criticism that she has received from other anthropologists dealing with island Southeast Asian societies, ERRINGTON'S major points - the universal valuation of unity, imagined via the idiom of cross-sex siblingship and the conception of entire societies as houses – remain useful contributions to the anthropology of island Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, it must be highlighted that she draws her major theoretical ideas from Structural Anthropology and that she is not always successful in altering these theoretical ideas in her attempt to make them fit her argument. My discussion concludes that a house-centric perspective seems to be a promising approach for the anthropological study of Southeast Asian forms of social organization. This approach seems to be especially promising in studying social classifications and their transformation, since the house's structure can provide a key to decipher the logic of these societies' symbolic classification systems.<sup>15</sup> My central finding becomes thus that despite the devastating criticism Structural Anthropology has received from postmodernist scholars, some of its theoretical concepts seem to remain useful in a postmodern world.

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<sup>15</sup> "Symbolic classification occurs when we use some things as a means of saying something about other things." (ELLEN 1996: 105)

## II. CENTRISM AND DUALISM

What is illuminated by ERRINGTON is how these two forms, which seem very different, are in fact transformations of each other. Both principles – that of dualism and centrism – are present in Eastern Indonesia and in the Centrist Archipelago. (CARSTEN 1995a: 123)

### II.1. THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO ERRINGTON'S MODEL

According to Janet CARSTEN, ERRINGTON “has provided a broad framework for the comparison of Southeast Asian societies in terms of their marriage systems, siblingship and houses” (CARSTEN 1995a: 122). ERRINGTON outlines this ‘broad framework’ in two related studies of insular Southeast Asian societies, first in her article *Incestuous Twins and the House Societies of Insular Southeast Asia* (ERRINGTON 1987) and later in her book *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm* (ERRINGTON 1989). In both studies ERRINGTON explicitly acknowledges the influence of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ ideas and her utilization of his concepts (e.g. ERRINGTON 1987: 405, 1989: 237). Since LÉVI-STRAUSS’ analytical concepts constitute the basis of ERRINGTON’S comparative approach, and furthermore represent an essential source of ideas for the anthropological study of Southeast Asian societies in general, I will explore some of his concepts in detail.

#### II.1.1. THE CONCEPT OF TRANSFORMATION

Everything in Indonesia, and beyond it in the Malayo-Polynesian and mainland Southeast Asian worlds of which it is a part, seems to be a transformation of everything else, sometimes even more so than it seems to be itself: it is no accident that structuralism was invented about Indonesia. (ERRINGTON 1989: 28)

The starting point for ERRINGTON’S analyses appears to be the assumption that the forms of social organization found throughout Southeast Asia represent transformations of one another. ERRINGTON employs the concept of transformation, because of the concept’s innate capacity to illuminate an intrinsic relationship, in this case, a relationship between social configurations that are commonly opposed when considered according to the paradigms of descent theory.

ERRINGTON’S comparative approach aims at supporting her thesis that the forms of social organization found throughout Southeast Asia are grounded on a common theme that is most visible in the contexts of marriage, siblingship, and houses. For ERRINGTON, the ‘Indic States’

on the one hand and the ‘hill tribes’<sup>16</sup> on the other, represent the two extreme forms of social organization found in this geographical space. According to her argument a comparison of these commonly distinguished<sup>17</sup> ‘types’ of society would illuminate that each shares more features with the other than it does not (ERRINGTON 1989: 29). ERRINGTON’S model thus rests on the premise that if the heuristic concept of transformation is employed, it is possible to prove that the social organization of ‘Indic States’ and ‘hill tribes’, represent variations of a common theme.

Even though ERRINGTON assumes her model to be of general validity for the whole of Southeast Asia (ibid.: 28), she, nevertheless, ‘limits’ her investigation to island Southeast Asian societies,<sup>18</sup> with interspersed references to mainland Southeast Asia.

In her analytic enterprise ERRINGTON employs the concept of transformation in several contexts and on different analytic levels. Her basic aim is to show that the forms of social organization found in her two conceptual areas, ‘Eastern Indonesia’ and the ‘Centrist Archipelago’, represent transformations of each other. Because the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ represents an idiosyncratic analytic category, ERRINGTON initially has to ‘unify’ the societies constituting this analytic category.

### **The Centrist Archipelago**

The ‘Centrist Archipelago’ represents a newly formulated conceptual space that is introduced by ERRINGTON. Thereby she employs the concept of transformation to show that two exemplary ‘kinds’ of society, one ‘hierarchical’ the other ‘level’ are based on a common theme that identifies them as belonging to the ‘Centrist’ type of societies. ERRINGTON claims that a comparison of these commonly distinguished societies, in terms of their marriage systems, siblinship and houses would illuminate that they share many features, and challenge the commonly held idea of the ‘hierarchical Indic State’ as a different sort of entity in respect to the ‘level hill tribe’ society (ibid.: 29).

ERRINGTON, in fact, uses the concept of transformation simultaneously in two analytic contexts with differing scope, but according to the same heuristic premises. In both cases the

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<sup>16</sup> ERRINGTON’S argument implies that the societies of ‘Eastern Indonesia’ are classified as belonging to the ‘hill tribe type’ of society.

<sup>17</sup> ERRINGTON seems to allude to LEACH’S classic distinction between Southeast Asian hill peoples and their mainly Buddhist, Indian influenced valley neighbors. LEACH’S theoretical formulations for North Burma/Myanmar, have in their broad outlines, not only stood the test of time, but have also been applied as a dictum in the study of Southeast Asian societies in general (cf. COHEN/WIJEYWARDENE 1984: 255).

<sup>18</sup> ERRINGTON excludes Sumatra from her analysis. It belongs, therefore, to neither of her conceptual ‘types’.

concept represents the means to unify elements of analytical categories to prove their relationship and thus their comparability. Her overall conclusion is that everything seems to be a transformation of everything in island Southeast Asia. In the course of her argument ERRINGTON identifies marriage systems, siblingship, and houses as the primary contexts of comparison. This choice of contexts, together with her emphasis on transformation as a heuristic device, proves the ‘structuralist’ influence that characterizes her work.<sup>19</sup> The essential paradigms of her ‘structuralist’ background will be discussed in the following chapter.

### II.1.1.1. Theoretical Starting Points

Structure can be defined as the internal relationship through which constituent elements of a whole are organized. Structural analysis thus consists of the discovery of significant elements and their order. (MARANDA/MARANDA 1971: 16)

In his survey of structural anthropology, Michael OPPITZ (1975) gives a principle definition of the concept of structure, which he perceives as the totality of elements related in such a way that the modification of one element or one relation brings about a modification of the other elements or relations. This definition is based on the concept of totality, which includes the idea of interdependence between its constitutive elements (ibid.: 19), implying at the same time that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

OPPITZ claims that LÉVI-STRAUSS’ conception of transformation was derived from the work of the British biologist D’Arcy Wentworth THOMPSON.<sup>20</sup> Inspired by the THOMPSON’S ideas, LÉVI-STRAUSS coupled the concept of transformation with that of structure, with this relationship becoming an essential aspect of his structuralism (ibid.: 215).<sup>21</sup>

Now the notion of transformation is inherent in structural analysis. I would even say that all errors, all the abuses committed through the notion of structure are a result of the fact that their authors have not understood that it is impossible to conceive of structure separate from the notion of transformation (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1994: 427 [1991: 113]).

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<sup>19</sup> In addition to these ‘structuralist’ concepts, ERRINGTON’S study is deeply influenced by the work and ideas of Clifford GEERTZ and Benedict ANDERSON. Their impact becomes especially apparent in ERRINGTON’S idea of the ‘Indic State’, which in many aspects resembles GEERTZ’S discussion of the Balinese polity (cf. GEERTZ 1980) and directly derived from ANDERSON’S study of the Javanese conception of ‘power’ (cf. ANDERSON 1972: 3). A second major influence is GEERTZ’S interpretative paradigm and his concept of ‘thick description’ as identified by James FOX (Fox 1991: 988). Nevertheless, her explicit sympathy for ‘structuralist’ ideas makes her study “a fairly non-dogmatic example of the “interpretation of meaning” school of anthropology (BABCOCK 1991: 135)”, which is in itself at times equated with postmodernist anthropology (cf. BOROFKY 1994: 25).

<sup>20</sup> This is, in fact, acknowledged by LÉVI-STRAUSS himself, who states that Wentworth THOMPSON’S interpretation of the visible differences between species as transformations was an illumination for him that deeply affected his conception of structure (cf. LÉVI-STRAUSS 1994: 427 [1991: 113]).

<sup>21</sup> “A very close relationship exists between the concept of transformation and that of structure, which occupies such a large place in our work (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1976a: 18).”



Another forerunner employing the concept of transformation was the Russian structuralist Vladimir PROPP.<sup>22</sup> In his analysis of Russian folk tales, PROPP identifies 31 constitutive elements<sup>23</sup> representing the basis upon which these tales are constructed (PROPP 1928). For PROPP, the differences between the tales are caused by transformations taking place between their elements (OPPITZ 1975: 215).

LÉVI-STRAUSS, who has reintroduced the concept of transformation independently and developed it further (MARANDA 1972: 342), refers to PROPP in his essay *Structure and Form: Reflections on a Work by Vladimir Propp* (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1983b: 115-145), in which he uses PROPP's monograph on the morphology of the folktale to demonstrate the advantages of his<sup>24</sup> structuralism, and the shortcomings of the latter's formalism.<sup>25</sup>

Formalist dichotomy, which opposes form and matter and which defines them by antithetic characters, is not imposed on him by [the] nature of things, but by the accidental choice which he made in a domain where form alone survives while matter is abolished. [...] We will be permitted to insist on this point which sums up the whole difference between formalism and structuralism. For [in] the former, the two domains must be absolutely separate, since form alone is intelligible, and content is only a residual deprived of any significant value. For structuralism, this opposition does not exist (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1976b: 131).

This citation of LÉVI-STRAUSS sums up one of the essential paradigms of his structuralism, viz. the inseparability of form and matter, or as it may also be expressed, of fact and value. This paradigm is further developed in Louis DUMONT's structuralism<sup>26</sup>, which represents the

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<sup>22</sup> In addition to PROPP, LEACH (1967) identifies Georges DUMÉZIL as another ancestor of LÉVI-STRAUSS' conception of transformation. His influence on LÉVI-STRAUSS becomes especially obvious in the context of mythology (ibid.: xvi).

<sup>23</sup> LÉVI-STRAUSS calls these elements, 'functions' (cf. LÉVI-STRAUSS 1976b: 136).

<sup>24</sup> After reading the book *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss [Das Nahe und das Ferne: Eine Autobiographie in Gesprächen]* (LÉVI-STRAUSS/ERIBON 1996 [1988]), I believe it is important to note that LÉVI-STRAUSS, himself, distinguishes between his own conception of structuralism, and structuralism as a collective term, which conflates the perspectives of scholars as different as LÉVI-STRAUSS, Michel FOUCAULT, Jacques LACAN and Roland BARTHES. In contrast to the indicated similarities between the latter, LÉVI-STRAUSS understands his conception of structuralism to be in line with the ideas of Émile BENVENISTE and Georges DUMÉZIL and refuses to see any similarities to the work of FOUCAULT, for example. With reference to its random application LÉVI-STRAUSS states that structuralism, as a collective term, has ceased to bear any meaning (ibid.: 109, 137).

<sup>25</sup> Formalism, here, is understood as an approach that emphasizes form at the expense of matter. Nevertheless, the label 'formalism' is used in various contexts. For instance, it might describe perspectives that valorize the 'old-fashioned ethnographic style', with its search for models and abstractions, which try to illuminate fundamental value-ideas at the expense of postmodern subjectivism, which highlights self-styled formats of description, the ethnographer's impressions and the actor's emotions (cf. PFEFFER 2001: 123-124). The notion of 'postmodernity' or 'postmodernism' might be characterized by its eclecticism and fracturing of reality and its tendency to isolate elements from their contexts, which is itself a consequence, and not a surmounting, of modern ideology (cf. WERTH: 2002: 167).

<sup>26</sup> LÉVI-STRAUSS acknowledges the similarities between his perspective and that of DUMONT (cf. LÉVI-STRAUSS/ERIBON 1996: 103 [1988]).

fundamental premise of his analytic model termed hierarchical opposition<sup>27</sup> (DUMONT 1972; 1979; 1980; 1986).

DUMONT identifies the absolute distinction between fact and value as a characteristic feature of modern societies (cf. DUMONT 1979: 809; 1980: 244). He contrasts modern and non-modern<sup>28</sup> societies on grounds of their respective ideologies, understood as a system of ideas and values current in a given social milieu (DUMONT 1991: 19 [1986]).

In non-modern societies, ideology is the unity of fact and value. [...] Distinguishing and according a value are not separate activities, nor even two steps in the same process, but another simultaneity: to distinguish is to value, and to value is to introduce hierarchy. Thus in non-modern ideology we should talk of the 'fact-value' or the 'idea-value', which amounts to the same thing: that is, here fact and idea also occupy the same space, since 'actual men do not *behave*, they *act* with an idea in their heads' (PARKIN 2003: 42, 45, original italics).

The concept of fact-value emphasizes their inseparability, since fact and value can never be purely one or the other, because they, by being at the same time fact and value, always consist of both aspects (ALVI 1999: 193).

DUMONT explains the observable existence of different and sometimes contrasting relationships found between opposed fact-values within a single society by identifying their belonging to different socio-cultural contexts and their location on different ideological levels which are hierarchically related to the ideological whole. According to DUMONT'S theory, the existence of contrasting fact-values proves their essentially 'asymmetrical' relationship since the change of ideological levels may include the reversal of oppositions, which, itself, highlights the change of levels, hence their existence. Thus, the reversal of an asymmetric opposition produces a meaningful contrast to the initial opposition since the previously encountered hierarchy is turned upside down and the change of levels marked. The reversal of a symmetric opposition, in contrast, produces no meaningful contrast. Since the relationship of the poles remains symmetric, the change of levels can not be identified (DUMONT: 1979: 811).

In DUMONT'S model ideology constitutes a whole that does not consist of only one, but of many levels seated upon each other like layers of an onion, thus forming a whole (ALVI 1999: 193). The opposition of fact-values happens on subordinated levels that are encompassed by this whole: the supreme level where no oppositions exist, representing the cardinal value. The

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<sup>27</sup> PARKIN (2003) identifies DUMONT'S 'model' or 'perspective' as a 'method'. "First, it should presumably be treated not as a theory but as a method in accordance with LÉVI-STRAUSS' view of his own work: in Daniel DE COPPET'S words, a hierarchical opposition is propositional, not theoretical" (ibid.: 102, references omitted).

<sup>28</sup> For DUMONT, non-modern does not imply the notion of progress as in the sense of pre-modern. The terms modern and non-modern are used to contrast ideological configurations (cf. BERGER 2000: 129).

undivided whole hierarchically encompasses the second order levels with their opposed fact-values, themselves representing wholes at less encompassing levels. Formally, an opposition is constituted when one fact-value represents the whole and therefore becomes hierarchically superior to the other fact-value. Thereby a meaningful asymmetry is established. For DUMONT hierarchy, his key concept denotes a relation that could be defined succinctly as ‘the encompassing of the contrary’ (DUMONT 1979: 809, 1980: 239).

DUMONT contrasts the non-modern or holistic ideology, stressing hierarchy and valorizing the social whole, as its cardinal value, while subordinating the human individual (DUMONT 1986: 279), with the atomizing tendencies of modern ideology. The modern ideology, following the premises of its cardinal value, the unbound self-sufficient individual (ibid.: 238, 261), absolutely distinguishes between fact and value (ibid.: 1986: 249), whereby facts are understood as being inherently equal. DUMONT uses the term ‘individualism’ to refer to this configuration of values, which gradually evolved in Western civilization and whose origins partially lie in the beginnings of Christianity. In this configuration, value becomes a ‘super added’ feature, a second order phenomenon turning an essentially symmetric relationship between equal facts into an asymmetry between facts charged with value (cf. WERTH 2002: 164).

In brief: the comparison of modern with non-modern societies turns on two contrary configurations of value. For us, man is an individual, the individual subject as an end in himself; for non-modern societies, it is to a large extent the society, the collective man, to which the individual is referred. I call the first way of thinking individualism, the second ‘holism’. The movement, the transition, which the anthropologists must make from one to the other is not easy (DUMONT 1975: 338).

From these premises it follows that DUMONT identifies those perspectives which oppose fact and value and define them antithetically, while emphasizing the principal equality<sup>29</sup> of facts, as grounding on essentially modern premises (DUMONT 1979: 809). Their conjunction with modern ideology renders these perspectives inadequate for the anthropological task of analyzing non-modern societies, where notions of equality are largely absent and where the whole might be more important than its parts (cf. PFEFFER 1992: 53). DUMONT classifies NEEDHAM’S conceptions of complementary dualism and binary classification as constituting

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<sup>29</sup> “Hierarchy is thus exiled from the domain of facts, and the asepsis prevailing in the social sciences guards us against hierarchical infection.” (DUMONT 1979: 809)

such an essentially modern approach that, for him, is inadequate for the analysis of non-modern societies (cf. DUMONT 1979: 807-808).<sup>30</sup>

By not making an *a priori* separation of ideas and values, we remain closer to the real relation – in non-modern societies – between thought and act, while intellectualist or positivist analysis tends to destroy this relation (DUMONT 1979: 814, my italics).

The theoretical premises of DUMONT'S perspective, will, to a large extent, provide the theoretical background of this paper. Nevertheless, I fully agree with LEACH (1967)<sup>31</sup>, who points out that analytical progress is linked to the systematic modification of established models, hence I will draw freely from other scholars whenever I think that their models, or certain aspects of them, represent more promising alternatives.

After this short detour to anthropological theory, let me return to the structuralists' concept of transformation. OPPITZ defines a transformation as being based on two premises: a matter evolving into another, and a matter remaining unchanged, representing the former's point of origin. Transformation thus presupposes, at least, two comparable matters, making comparison a fundamental domain of structuralism (OPPITZ 1975: 218).

To show how the concept of transformation is applied in structural analysis, I will summarize two essential contexts in which LÉVI-STRAUSS meets the demands of OPPITZ'S definition, viz. the comparison of two comparable matters, with the implicit assumption that one evolves from the other, without necessarily including the notion of progress.<sup>32</sup> These chosen contexts will be LÉVI-STRAUSS' structural study of myth and his models of affinal exchange, as expressed in his *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1969 [1949]).

The structural study of myth will be presented on the basis of LEACH'S works (LEACH 1967, 1976) dealing with this aspect of LÉVI-STRAUSS' *œuvre*. LEACH refers to LÉVI-STRAUSS' study of myth as the latter's "celebrated technique of myth interpretation" (LEACH 1976: 25).

The significance of the concept of transformation for LÉVI-STRAUSS' alliance theory will be presented by means of RUBEL and ROSMAN'S comparative study of Melanesian societies (RUBEL/ROSMAN 1978), where the authors employ the concept of transformation to highlight

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<sup>30</sup> "Altogether, binary classification is inadequate from two points of view. As regards the opposition themselves that it considers, it is wrong in looking on oppositions that are not of equal status as though they were; it claims to grasp the anatomy of ideas independently of the values that are indissolubly attached to them, and it errs therefore through a misplaced egalitarianism which voids the idea of its value. Secondly, it uniformly confuses contexts or situations which may or may not be distinguished in the ideology under study." (DUMONT 1979: 813)

<sup>31</sup> "The road to analytical progress is not through the slavish imitation of established procedures, be they those of LÉVI-STRAUSS or anyone else. We will only break new ground when we systematically try out modifications or even inversions of previously formulated argument." (LEACH 1967: x)

<sup>32</sup> "There is nothing to suggest that one is chronologically prior to the other. Their relation is not that of an original to a derivative form. It is rather that between forms symmetrically the reverse of each other, as if system represented a transformation of the same group." (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1966: 79)

relationships between different societies found in one geographic area,<sup>33</sup> implying the evolution of more complex forms of social organization from simpler ones.

### II.1.1.2. The Structural Study of Myth

Since social structural concepts are the very stuff of social anthropology, social anthropologists have traditionally interpreted myths as reflecting, and usually validating, the social structural principles of specific societies (DAVIS 1974: 7).

In the context of myth interpretation, LÉVI-STRAUSS uses the concept of transformation to supplement Roman JACOBSON'S insight that meaning emerges from the mixing of metaphor and metonymy.<sup>34</sup> In accordance with Bronislaw MALINOWSKI, LÉVI-STRAUSS sees 'myth as a charter for social action', but is additionally interested in problems that MALINOWSKI scarcely considered. One of these problems is the question whether there are some mythical themes which are universals, or nearly so, and which therefore can be studied cross-culturally. Since LÉVI-STRAUSS answers this question affirmatively, the myths belonging to that universal category are of special interest to him.<sup>35</sup> With reference to these myths, LÉVI-STRAUSS is arguing that, at a certain level of abstraction, the dialectical redundant structure of all myth is the same, or perhaps one might say, 'constitutes a set of variations on a common theme' (LEACH 1967: xvii).

In LÉVI-STRAUSS' model, 'meaning' not only depends on the combination of metaphor and metonymy, paradigmatic association and syntagmatic chain,<sup>36</sup> but upon transformations from one mode into the other and back again. The formal principles of LÉVI-STRAUSS' method consist of breaking up the syntagmatic chain of the total myth story into a sequence of episodes. These episodes are understood as the partial metaphoric transformation of every

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<sup>33</sup> Defining a bounded area became an essential aspect of LÉVI-STRAUSS' comparative approach (cf. LÉVI-STRAUSS/ÉRIBON 1996: 190-191).

<sup>34</sup> LEACH defines 'metonymy' as an intrinsic or prior relationship, implying that A and B belong to the same cultural context. Very roughly metonymy is where 'a part stands for a whole'. Correspondingly, a metaphoric relationship is marked by the absence of an intrinsic or prior relationship, A and B belong to different cultural contexts. Where metonymy implies contiguity, metaphor depends upon asserted similarity. Assuming metonymic relations LEACH speaks of signs, which are contrasted to symbols implying metaphoric relations (LEACH 1976: 14).

<sup>35</sup> Examples of these universal myth problems are, according to LEACH (1967: xvii): Is death final? Is an incest rule necessary? How did humanity begin?

<sup>36</sup> "The usage *metaphor/metonymy* is due to Roman JAKOBSON. LÉVI-STRAUSS (1966), in the tradition of DE SAUSSURE, describes almost the same distinction by the terms *paradigmatic/syntagmatic* (LEACH 1976: 15, original emphasis)." Nick ALLEN, with reference to de SAUSSURE, explains syntagmatic as referring to relations in *praesentia*, because the units that are related are effectively co-present, like the components of a sentence. Paradigmatic relations, however, are in *absentia*, since they link a unit that has been selected for use with others that have not been selected (ALLEN 2000: 43, original italics).

other, hence the story as a whole can be thought of as being a ‘palimpsest’<sup>37</sup> of superimposed and homologically related metaphoric transformations.

The analyst who seeks to decode the message embodied in the myth as a whole (which is different from the surface messages of the respective episodes) must look for a pattern of structure (of a somewhat abstract kind), which is common to the whole set of metaphors. In its initial state the mythical story stands in a linear form, one thing happening after another. The mythical events unfold in sequence, forming a syntagmatic chain, being linked by metonymy. The analyst has to identify the meaningful points, where the myth can be broken up and arranged into episodes. These episodes are thought of as being partial transformations of one another. The episodes are then rearranged and their relationship is considered as being metaphoric. So metonymy has to be converted into metaphor. The results are abstract elements, which need to be summed up and read again as a syntagmatic chain. This final switch from metaphor to metonymy brings about the overall meaning of the myth. The analyst has to make a double switch from the metonymic mode to the metaphoric and back again (ibid.: 25-26).

In summary, the task of the analyst wishing to unravel the meaning of a myth lies in breaking up the myth as a whole and rearranging the emerging elements under the premises of metonymy and metaphor.<sup>38</sup>

LEACH indicates that the heuristic value of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ technique of myth interpretation is not confined to mythology, but is of general importance for the anthropological study of, e.g. ritual activity. Since all utterances are sequences in time they are, by their very nature and similar to myths, syntagmatic chains of message bearing elements. One important aspect of most verbal messages is that they are synchronic: the end is implicit in the beginning and vice versa. The time interval between the beginning of the utterance and the end is so short that we are liable to forget that any time factor is involved at all. By contrast, ritual performances are often diachronic, separated by a considerable amount of time. This time span separating one element of the performance from another makes us liable to forget that these two elements belong to the same ritual complex, hence constituting a single message (ibid.: 26-27).

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<sup>37</sup> A palimpsest is a manuscript page that has been written on, scraped off, and used again. In common usage the word stands as a metaphor, negating author’s claims for exclusive originality, by underlining that writing exists only in the presence of already written.

<sup>38</sup> For a practical example of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ ‘celebrated technique of myth interpretation’ I would like to point to his essay *The Story of Asdiwal* (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1967a), where he analyzes a Tsimshian Indian myth, which LEACH identifies as “[...] the most successful piece of structural analysis of myth prior to the appearance of his *The Raw and the Cooked*.” (LEACH 1967: 1) LÉVI-STRAUSS interprets the myth of Asdiwal as functioning to reconcile the contradictions inherent in matrilineal descent combined with patrilocal residence (cf. DAVIS 1974: 8).

The Christian European custom by which brides are veiled and dressed in white and widows are veiled and dressed in black are both part of the same message. A bride is entering marriage, a widow is leaving it. The two customs are logically related. The reason we do not ordinarily see that they are logically related is because they are normally widely separated in time (ibid.: 27).

In conclusion, an analysis according to the premises of LÉVI-STRAUSS' technique of myth interpretation may help to decode the messages transmitted by means of ritual practice, which has to be understood as forming syntagmatic chains of message bearing elements.

LEACH concludes his introduction to *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism* (LEACH 1967), with reference to two essential premises of LÉVI-STRAUSS' argument. First, that the order in which we perceive the world is something which we impose upon it, and that man has the choice to order the world in different ways in quite an arbitrary manner, and second, that structures of relationship are subject to transformation (cf. ibid.: xviii-xix).

### **II.1.1.3. Kinship and Exchange**

In the first place both kinship terms and formal marriage rules constitute distinguishable 'sets' of metonymically related cultural items – like the individual items of clothing which go to make up a particular costume. Furthermore, as we move across the ethnographic map, we often find that neighbouring communities of broadly similar culture adopt strikingly different conventions regarding the classification of kin. A semiotic structuralist style of analysis of the kind I have been describing suggests that in circumstances of this sort the overall pattern should be viewed as one of successive transformation rather than simple difference. (LEACH 1976: 65)

In their book *Your Own Pigs You May Not Eat* (RUBEL/ROSMAN 1978), the structural anthropologists Paula RUBEL and Abraham ROSMAN employ the concept of transformation as an analytical tool for the comparative analysis of thirteen New Guinean societies. The authors use LÉVI-STRAUSS' structural model of affinal exchange and the associated concept of transformation to evaluate the structural relationships between these geographically related societies.

In their comparative study, RUBEL and ROSMAN focus on distinctive ceremonial distributions as a way of understanding the meaning of exchange relations in various socio-cultural contexts. They regard ceremonial distributions as constituting 'total social phenomena' in the sense of the term introduced by Marcel MAUSS (MAUSS 1990: 10 [1924]).<sup>39</sup> As total social phenomena these distributions manifest the interplay between kinship and marriage structures, the nature of political leadership, the economic structure, and the religious and symbolic systems (RUBEL/ROSMAN 1978: 1).

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<sup>39</sup> For definitions of Mauss' concept of *fait social total* see, e.g. OPPITZ (1975: 100); NEEDHAM (1979: 34); LÉVI-STRAUSS (1993: 107 [1969]); ALLEN (2000: 97).

In accordance with some of the already introduced scholars,<sup>40</sup> RUBEL and ROSMAN see the distinguishing feature of structuralism in the emphasis it places upon the relationship between elements, rather than upon the nature of those elements themselves, consequently contrasting structuralism from other theoretical approaches. Since these elements of structural analysis need to be identified first, they are themselves understood as constituting analytic constructs and not as given facts.

Even though both authors stress relationship as the most important aspect of structure, they also emphasize that structure is nevertheless more than mere relationships. A structure constitutes a system. A relationship is merely a part of a system (*ibid.*: 2). The systemic nature of a structure lies in the fact that all elements are interrelated, hence a structure can only be understood when it is seen in its totality. Therefore, one of the paramount premises of structuralism is the idea of interrelated structures constituting a whole, whereby meaning is conveyed through the relation of elements between and within these structures.

Structure is not reducible to a system: a group of elements and the relations that unite them. In order to be able to speak of structure, it is necessary for there to be invariant relationships between elements and relations among several sets, so that one can move from one set to another by means of a transformation (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1994: 428 [1991: 113]).

While discussing the relationship of different structures, the authors identify hierarchy as the constitutive feature of these relations. The relative boundedness, found as an attribute of certain structures, can be seen as the result of hierarchy. What appears to be external to a structure on one level, making it appear bounded, reappears as being internal to the encompassing structure on a higher level (*ibid.*).<sup>41</sup>

Just as LÉVI-STRAUSS the two authors conceive the concept of transformation as an essential aspect of the concept of structure. They employ the concept of transformation to describe the relationship between different structures within a single society or between structures of different societies. Within a single society the authors claim that different structures stand in a homologous relationship to one another. The analyst has to illuminate the transformations which make the transition from one structure to the next possible (*ibid.*: 3).

With their intention of comparing different societies, RUBEL and ROSMAN apply the concept of transformation in a way that resembles ERRINGTON'S. As per ERRINGTON, they link the

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<sup>40</sup> RUBEL and ROSMAN claim that they draw upon the theoretical writings of LÉVI-STRAUSS, LEACH and JAKOBSON.

<sup>41</sup> Here we encounter a perception of the concept of structure, which seems to resemble the core paradigm of DUMONT'S perspective, viz. the idea of encompassed distinguishable levels/structures constituting a whole.



concept of transformation to the comparative study of homologous structures in different, but geographically related societies.

Another approach to transformation involves the comparison of a structure or structures of a single society with the structures of one or more other societies within a geographic area, with the assumption of a more or less remote genetic relationship between them. As one moves in the analysis from one society to another, the structures of the second are shown to be a transformation of the first (RUBEL/ROSMAN 1978: 3-4).

RUBEL and ROSMAN'S study focuses on the ways in which structures of related societies are transformed through time. Their starting points are basic structures, which diversify and develop into more complex structures, whereby the process of sophistication is perceived as a transformation.

Their comparative investigation revolves around the concept of exchange, which they define as the giving and receiving of women, goods, and services between groups. This makes exchange the fundamental aspect of group interlinkage in the Melanesian context, and since these linkages form the basis for the establishment of relationships, the investigation of exchange is an investigation of relationships between groups (ibid.: 5). With their assumption that the exchange of women represents the basic form of relationship between groups, the authors, apparently, follow LÉVI-STRAUSS' premises.

According to RUBEL and ROSMAN, LÉVI-STRAUSS developed three types of structural models, to explain the rules governing the exchange of women between groups. These models are (1) restricted exchange, based on bilateral cross-cousin marriage; (2) generalized exchange, based on patrilineal cross-cousin marriage;<sup>42</sup> and (3) generalized exchange, based on matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. Each of these models represents a different type of structure, in which social groups represent the constitutive elements that are combined in different ways (RUBEL/ROSMAN 1978: 4). Furthermore, these three structural models are understood as being related through a series of transformations whereby the dualism of restricted exchange represents the basic form from which the other two triadic forms have evolved as a result of consecutive transformations (ibid.: 5).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> “[...] serious doubts have been raised as to the existence of the form in reality.” (DUMONT 2006: 81 [1971])

<sup>43</sup> LÉVI-STRAUSS himself reverses this premise stated in the *Elementary Structures of Kinship* and says: “It is that social dualism exists not only in the form which we described but assumes and covers a triadic system, of which each individual case of dualism (taken in a broad sense, but including among other forms, dual organizations) should be considered as a simplification and as a limit. [...] Moreover, this manner of formulating the problem seems to be more convenient for the purpose of historical reconstruction, since there are cases when the triadic “core” appears to be not only logically more simple, but older than the dyadic “upper crust” which covers it.” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1976b: 73-74)

In his seminal work *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, LÉVI-STRAUSS (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1969 [1949], 1993 [1969]) conceptualizes marriage as the gift exchange of sisters (daughters) by brothers (fathers). This conceptualization enables him to develop a concept of exchange and reciprocity of great generality and rigor (GREGORY 1994: 925), which is commonly referred to as LÉVI-STRAUSS' theory of marriage alliance (cf. e.g. DUMONT 2006: 61 [1971]).

The alliance theory of structuralist anthropologists essentially derives from the Maussian concept of the exchange of women. Such exchange however, is normally intragenerational or horizontal, while kinship also involves the equally important intergenerational or vertical dimension (ALLEN 2000: 97).

LÉVI-STRAUSS draws a clear distinction between 'elementary' and 'complex' structures of kinship, while the former represent the focus of his analytical attention. Elementary structures are marked by the existence of positive marriage rules, i.e. these societies not only have negative marriage rules, defining who is forbidden for marriage, but also rules prescribing who ought to be married.<sup>44</sup> These elementary structures are further subdivided into structures of restricted and those of generalized exchange.

Restricted exchange takes a dyadic form which can be conceptualized as  $A \leftrightarrow B$ , and expressed in terms of symmetry.<sup>45</sup> Symmetric exchange is the continual exchange of women between two exogamous groups.<sup>46</sup> These groups are very often conceived of as unilineal descent groups or their segments; nevertheless, different cultural units like houses or villages can also constitute these exchange groups.

The notion of 'sister exchange', which is often used to describe this form of reciprocity between exogamous units, precisely captures the essence of restricted exchange (GREGORY 1994: 926). Thus, the engendered and maintained alliance relations are based on a prescriptive

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<sup>44</sup> "The category designated as spouse by such rules is itself identified by a kin term. [...] A prescriptive terminology expresses the alliance relationship as continuing between generations." (PARKIN 1997: 57)

"[...] a man is not simply prohibited to marry certain categories or types of woman, but he is positively constrained to take a wife from a specific terminological class of persons." (NEEDHAM 1973b: 166)

"We should actually say positive rules of a certain type, since these societies uniformly prescribe or prefer marriage between persons falling into the anthropological category of 'cross-cousins'. Without being too arbitrary, following Lévi-Strauss and other authors, this restricted theory can be designated the *theory of marriage alliance*. But in *Elementary Structures* it is integrated with a general theory which one can call a structural theory, or, perhaps, to be more precise, a *structuralist theory* of kinship, centred on a structural interpretation of the prohibition of incest." (DUMONT 2006: 63 [1971], original emphasis)

<sup>45</sup> LÉVI-STRAUSS summarizes restricted exchange under the rule: "[...] if a man of group A marries a woman of group B, then a man of B marries a woman of A." (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993 [1969]: 599)

<sup>46</sup> Exogamy, according to WAGNER, refers to the moral injunction of selecting recognized sexual partners and/or spouses from social units other than those of which oneself is a member (WAGNER 1972: 602).

marriage rule, stating that the respective spouses should belong to the kinship category of bilateral cross-cousins (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993: 596 [1969]).<sup>47</sup>

This is the case in which men exchange their sisters in marriage, or more generally in which two groups intermarry in both senses, the women born in the one becoming the wives of the men born in the other and vice versa, [...] (DUMONT 2006: 70 [1971]).

A fundamental difference between the model of restricted exchange and that of generalized exchange is that the latter emphasizes laterality.<sup>48</sup> I will use the term ‘generalized exchange’ exclusively referring to matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, because I consider it more appropriate to view patrilateral cross-cousin marriage as an intermediate between restricted and generalized exchange. In the model of generalized exchange, women are said to move asymmetrically between alliance groups. These groups stand to one another in fixed relationships differentiating them as wife-givers and wife-takers. Ego’s group receives women from their wife-givers and gives women to their wife-takers. These relations are never reversed.<sup>49</sup> From this it follows that, in its most basic form the model requires the existence of, at least, three exchange groups, A, B and C whose exchange relations can be envisaged as forming a circle (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993: 372-374 [1969]).

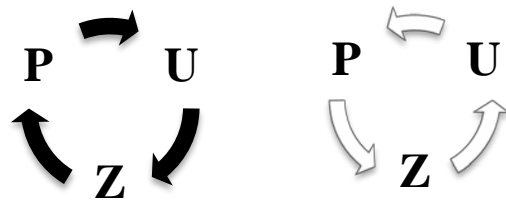
In fact, the exchange of women is complemented by the exchange of goods and services, which flow in the reverse direction of the women. Schematically, these exchange systems can be conceptualized as constituting two circles, in which women flow in one direction and goods and services in the other (FOX 1980). The asymmetry of the system is also expressed in status differences between the exchange units. Wife-givers or wife-takers may be superior to their respective exchange partner in one relationship, only to reverse this status in relation to their other exchange partner. Thus, in a hypogamous system wife-givers are superior to their wife-takers, only to be inferior in relation to their own wife-givers, who might be the wife-takers of their wife-takers. A hypergamous system reverses these relationships.

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<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that the actual married spouses are only members of a larger category of relatives identified by the same kin term, and that any person within that category is suitable for exchange from the system’s point of view. It is not unusual that preferences are expressed for or against particular relatives within the overall category of potential spouse. These preferences are often expressed on grounds of age or genealogical position. There are different ways of referring to the particular type of symmetric affinal exchange in anthropological jargon: bilateral cross-cousin marriage, symmetric prescriptive alliance, Dravidian, direct exchange and restricted exchange (PARKIN 1997: 79, 85).

<sup>48</sup> In this instance, LÉVI-STRAUSS summarizes the form of exchange under the rule: “[...] if a man of group A marries a woman of group B, then a man of B marries a woman of C.” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993 [1967]: 599)

<sup>49</sup> The cardinal rule of generalized exchange is that wife-takers and wife-givers should be kept conceptually distinct. Synonyms used in the anthropological literature to refer to generalized exchange are: matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, asymmetric prescriptive alliance, Kachin-type marriage, indirect exchange, circulating connubium, mother’s brother’s daughter (MBD) marriage (PARKIN 1997: 92, 98).

**Figure 1.** Schematized model of generalized/asymmetric exchange

A. Flow of women

B. Flow of goods and services

What, now, is ‘generalized exchange’? It is, in fact, a system in which, between two defined ‘partners’, exchange is no longer reciprocal, but unilateral or oriented [...]. In order for the system to be viable, it is obviously necessary for the chain to be closed, i.e. the first giver in the chain, P, receives from another partner, let us say Z. This is what Dutch authors working on Indonesia called ‘circulating connubium’ [...] while restricted exchange corresponds to marriage between the bilateral cross cousin, generalised exchange corresponds exclusively to marriage with the matrilineal cross cousin (mother’s brother’s daughter) (DUMONT 2006: 71 [1971]).

According to RUBEL and ROSMAN, LÉVI-STRAUSS’ three structural models are assigned to two categories, viz. restricted and generalized exchange, in which the category of generalized exchange includes two models: one based on the marriage of the patrilineal cross-cousin and the other, based on the marriage of the matrilineal cross-cousin.

In my argument I follow Chris GREGORY (1994: 925-927), who presents a refined perception of these structural models of affinal exchange, where the latter type (MBD marriage), together with restricted exchange (bilateral cross-cousin exchange), are understood as constituting the two extreme forms of affinal alliance in which the flow of women is fixed over generations, and hence represent the means by which inter-group solidarity is attained.

Nevertheless, these two forms fix the flow of women in contrasting ways. In the case of generalized/asymmetric exchange, with matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, women flow exclusively in one direction between any two alliance-groups, whereas in the case of restricted/symmetric exchange women are given and reciprocally received between the same groups – they flow in both directions simultaneously.

On the structural level, marriage with the patrilineal cross-cousin may be understood as an intermediate form, constituting what GREGORY calls delayed exchange (*ibid.*: 926), or in the words of LÉVI-STRAUSS it “expresses discontinuity” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993: 599 [1969]). In this special case<sup>50</sup> the direction of exchange gets reversed rather than repeated in each

<sup>50</sup> “[...] but of all the three forms it is the least attested, yet the most discussed [...]” (DUMONT 2006: 79 [1971]).

successive generation. A male ego is supposed to give his sister to another man, and in return later receives the daughter of this marriage for his own son. Although this model is based on symmetry, the reciprocity is delayed and is completed only in the following generation. This means that while women are exchanged, they go in only one direction in each generation; therefore the model needs a minimum of three spouse-exchange groups (PARKIN 1997: 102). This is why in my argument I depart from RUBEL and ROSMAN'S classification. In contrast to them I will speak of generalized exchange exclusively in the context of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage.

#### **II.1.1.4. Structural Transformations and Elementary Structures**

Before summarizing the structuralist concept of transformation with recourse to the models of affinal exchange, I would like to make a general point. The structural models and the rules of marriage and mating that I have presented are much more concerned with ideas and values than with observable behavior.<sup>51</sup> They are assertions about what ought to be the case. What happens in reality is usually something very different (LEACH 1976: 68). Therefore, this perspective might be understood as representing the 'old-fashioned ethnographic style' whose analytic value for contemporary anthropological studies is appreciated by Georg PFEFFER (2001) in his analysis of Gadaba ritual:

The present article will avoid such subjectivism and retain the old-fashioned formalism as ethnographic style. [...] It will not explain the ecological determination or the origin of the sacred action, nor will the functions and the class character of the exchange be elaborated, but all the same, meaning will be deciphered from ritual interaction, i.e. certain fundamental value-ideas of the tribal people involved (PFEFFER 2001: 124).

In his introduction to the ideas of structuralism, OPPITZ states that the structuralist's concept of transformation presupposes two comparable matters. In my argumentation I will follow RUBEL and ROSMAN and treat the structural models of restricted and generalized exchange as exemplifying these matters of comparison.

According to OPPITZ, the two constitutive features characterizing the elements of a transformation are, (a) that one element evolves out of the other, and that (b) the latter remains unchanged, representing the former's point of origin.<sup>52</sup> Following GREGORY, who

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<sup>51</sup> "LÉVI-STRAUSSIAN rationalists call themselves 'structuralists', but structure here refers to the structure of ideas rather than the structure of society. Because of their interest in ideas as opposed to objective facts rationalist anthropologists tend to be more concerned with what is said than with what is done" (LEACH 1976: 5).

<sup>52</sup> For DURKHEIM, MAUSS and (with reservations) LÉVI-STRAUSS this development is seen in terms of an evolutionary framework, in which more complex structures evolve from simpler ones.

perceives restricted exchange and generalized exchange as constituting two extremes, we may think of restricted exchange as the basic model from which generalized exchange has evolved. The answers to the following questions may help the reader in understanding why it is analytically correct to apply the concept of transformation to the three models of affinal exchange in a structuralist framework.

*What makes restricted exchange or bilateral cross-cousin marriage the basic structural model of affinal alliance?*

For LÉVI-STRAUSS, following DURKHEIM and MAUSS (DURKHEIM/MAUSS 1963 [1903]), the structural model of restricted exchange represents the basic form of affinal alliance, because it is the most direct way to fulfil the requirements of the ‘universal’<sup>53</sup> incest taboo (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993: 52-53, 57 [1969]).<sup>54</sup> LÉVI-STRAUSS’ theory of incest prohibition in fact derives from a theory of exogamy that originates from MAUSS’ rules of reciprocity (cf. WAGNER 1972: 601). The associated basic model of social organization<sup>55</sup> is referred to as dual organization, a model in which the society as a whole is understood as being divided into two exchange units. This bisecting of society may follow vertical lines and lead to the constitution of exogamous unilineal descent groups, which are referred to as patri- or matrimoieties,<sup>56</sup> between which spouses are exchanged in an obligatory manner; or the whole society may be divided into horizontally distinguished endogamous generation moieties, which do not exchange women but children (ALLEN 2000: 97).

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<sup>53</sup> “The incest prohibition is universal [in the perception of LÉVI-STRAUSS, B.B.]. For this reason, instead of trying to explain it, LÉVI-STRAUSS takes it as defining synthetically the essence of kinship: a man cannot marry his close relatives, his sister or his daughter; therefore he must abandon them as wives to other men and receive in return his own wife (or wives) from others. The prohibition of incest is the negative expression of a law of *exchange*, the partial expression of a universal principle of reciprocity, the necessary counterpart to the setting up of social ties between families, from which the constitution of the family itself cannot be separated, as is often done under the influence of common sense (DUMONT 2006: 63 [1971], original italics).”

<sup>54</sup> Roy WAGNER (1972) discusses the alleged ‘universality’ of the incest taboo in his article *Incest and Identity: A Critique and Theory on the Subject of Exogamy and Incest Prohibition*. WAGNER defines incest as “acts of sexual (or morally equivalent) nature as understood to be committed between persons manifesting kin roles that explicitly or implicitly exclude them (ibid.: 602).” For him a ‘universal’ statement of an ‘incest taboo’ is only possible in the context of a genealogical model that is also considered universal. WAGNER emphasizes that this genealogical model is an assumption made for comparative purposes. For him, by contrast, the essence of kinship is *interpretation* of genealogy, rather than genealogy itself (ibid.: 611 original emphasis). WAGNER’S reluctance to separate meaning from action, or kin category from kin relationship induces him to criticize the conception of a ‘universal’ incest taboo (ibid.). NEEDHAM proclaims in a similar way that “‘incest’ is a mistaken sociological concept not a universal” (NEEDHAM 1971: 29). NEEDHAM essentially criticises the conception of a generally prohibited category of kin that would make incest prohibitions universal. For him the only universal is the mere fact of prohibition; and the common feature of prohibition does not mean that the incest regulations of different societies shall in any specific respect be comparable (ibid.: 31).

<sup>55</sup> For the sake of brevity the following models of social organization are simplified and reduced to their most characteristic features.

<sup>56</sup> According to NEEDHAM, DURKHEIM and MAUSS (1963 [1903]) used the term ‘phratry’, to describe the social phenomena now commonly referred to by the term ‘moiety’ (NEEDHAM 1963: 10).

Dual organization is accompanied by a dichotomous division in the kinship terminology. Particularly where the division follows vertical lines, cousins are classed in two categories. Parallel-cousins belong to the same moiety as Ego, whereas cross-cousins belong to the other moiety and are consequently the nearest collaterals, of the same generation, with whom marriage is possible (DUMONT 2006: 66-67 [1971]).

*Which premises of the restricted exchange model have been altered in the generalized exchange model?*

From this basic model of social organization, generalized exchange is seen as a transformation in which the two groups are replaced by (at least) three groups and direct reciprocity is replaced by laterality and delayed reciprocity, which involves the element of trust, since the exchange units have to believe in the closing of the circle (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993: 373 [1969]). The model of generalized exchange represents an evolvment, because the organizational premises of the former model become more elaborated and it employs rules which are dispensable for the observance of the incest taboo, as it is defined by LÉVI-STRAUSS.

*Which structural premises have remained unchanged?*

Despite differences on the organizational level both models are capable of attaining the highest degree of inter-group solidarity. They link not only the respective units of exchange, but entire social groups (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993: 599 [1969]), hence embracing and articulating the society as a whole. Even though it seems that the societies employing symmetric exchange are disparately organized from those employing asymmetric exchange, Rodney NEEDHAM notes that their respective modes of symbolic classification both follow a dualistic scheme (NEEDHAM 1963: xxxviii).

*Why is the model of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage important for the application of the concept of transformation?*

Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage or delayed exchange might be perceived as representing an intermediary state, hence relating the two ends of a continuum and highlighting them to constitute a transformation of a common theme, since patrilateral cross-cousin marriage expresses attributes of both 'extremes'. Even though it is symmetric (an attribute of restricted exchange), reciprocity is completed only with the delay of one generation, i.e. women are exchanged, but they go in only one direction in each generation (an attribute of generalized exchange), and the direction being reversed in the next. Since Ego gives his sister to another

group and gets a wife for his son in exchange, Ego has to obtain his wife from a third group, which makes the existence of at least three exchange groups (an attribute of generalized exchange) a precondition of the delayed model. Ego's grandson marries a woman from the same group as Ego, so we speak of an 'alternation of generations', another attribute that this model shares with the bilateral form of restricted exchange (DUMONT 2006: 80). The marriage of the patrilateral cross-cousin unites the respective units of exchange in each generation, but because it lacks continuity it is not capable of embracing the whole society, as it is possible in the former two cases (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1993: 599-600[1969]).

The exchange of women, paralleled and completed by the simultaneous exchange of goods and services, according to the prescription of positive marriage rules represents the 'common theme' uniting these models with reference to the premises of the concept of transformation. Hence LÉVI-STRAUSS argues that these three transformations constitute the analytic category of elementary structures.

In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, LÉVI-STRAUSS employs the concept of transformation and the associated structural models of affinal exchange to formulate an alternative anthropological perspective to that of the British school of social anthropology, which is known for its focus on investigating unilineal descent groups.<sup>57</sup> This perspective, commonly known as descent theory, treats unilineal descent groups as the primordial feature of social organization and their study as the primary focus of social anthropology. LÉVI-STRAUSS' perspective, known as alliance theory, in contrast, focuses on the relationship between groups and on the ways these relations are engendered and maintained through marriages and other exchanges (cf. PEACOCK 1981: 1003).

The development of LÉVI-STRAUSS' alliance theory must be perceived as an attempt to realize his general objective, which is the characterization and analytical classification of kinship systems on the basis of their underlying structure, understood as a cultural code expressed by all elements of collective life (ibid.). The detection of a positive marriage rule and the consequent classification as an elementary kinship structure is a prominent abstract feature that may characterize a society's underlying structural pattern, according to the premises of LÉVI-STRAUSS' structuralism.

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<sup>57</sup> "[...] those two opposed, not to say hostile schools of thought known to anthropology as descent theory and alliance theory." (PARKIN 2006: vii)



### II.1.2. THE CONCEPT OF HOUSE SOCIETIES

The relevance and usefulness of the house as an analytical concept is in many ways a result of the frustration of applying kinship terminology that has been developed in other parts of the world (primarily Africa and North America) to societies that exhibit considerable variation and flexibility. Various approaches have resulted in partial explanations at best, the most famous controversy being Embree's (1950) description of Thai society as being 'loosely structured' (SPARKES 2003: 9).<sup>58</sup>

In the 1970s the house emerged as a new analytical concept in anthropology. Independent research examining many different societies in various parts of the world led to the realization that the established analytical vocabulary of kinship studies failed to adequately characterize social units.<sup>59</sup> The result was a concomitant recognition of the heuristic value of indigenous concepts and terms. In turn, this recognition questioned the validity of classic anthropological perspectives and their analytic categories (GILLESPIE 2000a: 6). The classic anthropological approaches to kinship and social organization, which were based on an objectivist assumption about the universal validity of scientifically generated typologies and categories, were becoming more and more problematic as their constitutive elements were successively deconstructed and exposed as essentially modern constructs.

Ethnographic descriptions have dispelled the notion that prescriptive and proscriptive kinship "rules" govern social life. Kin ties are acknowledged to be optative and mutable rather than established at birth or marriage, and "fictive" relationships can be considered just as legitimate as "biological" ones. Indeed, even the presumed irreducible, natural component of kinship – a link between persons resulting from procreative acts – has been exposed as a Western notion that misleadingly privileges one construction of social relationships over potential others. (GILLESPIE 2000a: 1)

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<sup>58</sup> John EMBREE (1950) a student of RADCLIFFE-BROWN, described the social organization of Thai society as 'loosely structured', because to him, the reciprocal rights and duties between social units seemed to be loosely defined and to not follow explicit rules. For EMBREE this lack of formal rules was further supplemented by a lack of social corporation and continuity. Martin RÖSSLER (1998), however, states that the only context where it would be correct to apply the term 'loose' in studying this society, is on the level of congruence with classic models of anthropology (ibid.: 438).

<sup>59</sup> For example see Adam KUPER (1982), who criticizes the 'lineage' or descent theory of British social anthropology, stating that the 'lineage' model, its predecessors and its analogs, have no value for anthropological analysis. The reasons he gives to justify his judgement are, first, that the model does not represent folk models which actors anywhere have of their own societies, and secondly, that there do not appear to be any societies in which vital political or economic activities are organized by a repetitive series of descent groups. For KUPER the 'lineage' as well as alliance theorists have done little more than reorder the elements of descent theory in novel combinations, without ever questioning the fundamental assumptions of the model (KUPER 1982: 91-92). Other scholars like David SCHNEIDER (1972, 1984) and Rodney NEEDHAM (1971) questioned the overall validity of kinship as an analytical concept, declaring it to be an anthropological construct without indigenous equivalence. While SCHNEIDER and NEEDHAM criticize the analytic categories used by anthropologists, KUPER criticizes the anthropologists' models (cf. HARDENBERG 2007: 161).

Roland HARDENBERG (2007) remarks that even though the weak points of the classic theories were exposed and hence the necessity for new models and intensive research highlighted, the anthropological field of kinship studies was shaken by this continuous and fundamental criticism.<sup>60</sup> Modernization and globalization became the new anthropological focus and the scholars were looking for alternative models. As a result, kinship studies vanished from the anthropological curricula in many countries. In this time of rapid change, accompanied by the expansion of bureaucratic and capitalistic cultures, the classic models of kinship studies were refuted as representing perspectives that were too static and inflexible (ibid.: 161-162).

According to Susan GILLESPIE (GILLESPIE 2000a), the epistemological shift away from the classic concepts of kinship studies contributed to the revelation that in many societies the indigenous word for 'house' also refers to a group of people associated with some spatial locus, one that most often includes a dwelling or other structure. In practical discourse and action the house may represent social, economic, political and ritual relationships among various persons, who may form a permanent or temporary collectivity (ibid.:6). As a consequence the symbolism of domestic houses had received a fair amount of anthropological attention (e.g. NEEDHAM 1962; CUNNINGHAM 1973 [1964]; TAMBIAH 1969; BLOCH 1971; BOURDIEU 1977).<sup>61</sup>

BOURDIEU'S statements made with reference to his analysis of the Kabyle house, in his book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (BOURDIEU 1977), represent a paradigmatic example of how the classic anthropological perspectives were becoming criticized on grounds of an increased attention directed towards the house. In highlighting the significance of the house as an indigenous concept to convey meaning, BOURDIEU questions the appropriateness of analytic categories that were understood as universals on the one hand, and on the other hand he emphasizes the body as an agent in the process of decoding cultural messages. With his

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<sup>60</sup> "To put it very bluntly, then, there is no such thing as kinship, and it follows that there can be no such thing as kinship theory." (NEEDHAM 1971: 5)

<sup>61</sup> "In a social formation in which the absence of the symbolic-product-conserving techniques associated with literacy retards the objectification of symbolic and particularly cultural capital, inhabited space – and above all the house – is the principal locus for the objectification of the generative schemes; and, through the intermediary of the divisions and hierarchies it sets up between things, persons, and practices, this tangible classifying system continuously inculcates and reinforces the taxonomic principles underlying the arbitrary provisions of this culture. [...] This analysis of the relationship between the objectified schemes and the schemes incorporated or being incorporated presupposes a structural analysis of the social organization of the internal space of the house and the relation of this internal space to the external space, an analysis which is not an end in itself but which, precisely on account of the (dangerous) affinity between objectivism and all that is already objectified, is the only means of fully grasping the structuring structures which, remaining obscure to themselves, are revealed only in the objects they structure. The house, an *opus operatum*, lends itself as such to a deciphering, but only to a deciphering which does not forget that the "book" from which the children learn their vision of the world is read with the body, in and through the movements and displacements which make the space within which they are enacted as much as they are made by it." (BOURDIEU 1977: 89-90 original italics)

emphasis on the body, BOURDIEU criticizes the objectivism and idealism of the classic structural approaches, which are said to ignore the logic of practice as well as actor's subjective thinking about practice (cf. ALVI 1999: 155).

Despite the growing attention to the house as representing one of the most important cultural categories found across the globe, only LÉVI-STRAUSS developed an idea of the *house* (*maison*) as a specific analytical category of comparative utility that concurrently coincides with a recurrent indigenous concept (cf. GILLESPIE 2000a: 7). Thus, LÉVI-STRAUSS inspired a concentrated, albeit somewhat partial, interest in the analytic significance of the house (HOWELL 2003: 17).

[...] it was LÉVI-STRAUSS, following local imagery from native North America and matching it up with historical data from medieval Europe, who first drew attention to the potential theoretical significance of the house who saw in house societies a specific and widespread social type, and who emphasized the significance of the indigenous category of house in the study of systems of social organization which appeared to make no sense when seen in terms of the categories of conventional kinship analysis (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 6).

In recent years several collections of papers have been published in which anthropologists focus on the house and its usefulness for the analysis of a wide range of societies.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, empirical examples from Southeast Asia dominate these publications, most of which take LÉVI-STRAUSS' ideas as their cue for analysis.

Since this paper is concerned with models and arguments that represent enhancements of LÉVI-STRAUSS' ideas, especially when these are applied in the context of Southeast Asian cognatic societies, it is essential to explore his concept of *house* and *house societies* (*sociétés à maison*) in some detail.<sup>63</sup>

### II.1.2.1. The House of Lévi-Strauss

The fault lies in the disregard of the concept of 'house' as a moral person possessing a domain, perpetuated by transmission of its name, wealth and titles through a real or fictitious descent line

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<sup>62</sup> E.g. MACDONALD (ed.) (1987); WATERSON (1990); FOX (1993); CARSTEN/HUGH JONES (eds.) (1995); JOYCE/GILLESPIE (eds.) (2000); SPARKES/HOWELL (eds.) (2003); these publications are supplemented by several journal articles dealing with the *house* concept e.g. RÖSSLER (1998) and HARDENBERG (2007), and publications in which the concept is used as a heuristic device e.g. ERRINGTON (1987, 1989) and BERGER (2000).

<sup>63</sup> The genesis of LÉVI-STRAUSS' conception of *house* and *house societies* is summarized at length in each of the above-mentioned publications. For the description of LÉVI-STRAUSS' conception I will therefore concentrate mainly on one of these publications, viz. Susan GILLESPIE'S paper *Lévi-Strauss: Maison and Société à Maison* (GILLESPIE 2000b). Her summary of LÉVI-STRAUSS' concepts and their impact on contemporary anthropology in my opinion seems to be the most thorough. Nevertheless, I think the most concise summary is the one given by HARDENBERG (2007).

which is recognized as legitimate as long as the continuity can be expressed in the language of descent or alliance or, most often, of both together (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987: 152).<sup>64</sup>

LÉVI-STRAUSS' first usage of the notion of the *house* as a social group appears in a re-analysis of Franz BOAS'S ethnography of the Kwakiutl (BOAS 1966). LÉVI-STRAUSS' attempt to reanalyse Kwakiutl social organization must be seen as part of his general intention to classify and characterize societies according to the dominant features of their kinship system (cf. DUMONT 2006: 71 [1971]).

LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept of *house* societies represents a continuation of his structural anthropology, which implies a certain kind of evolutionism. With his attempt of establishing the *house* as an analytic category, LÉVI-STRAUSS intended to clarify ambiguities inherent in the anthropologist' struggle to map their classificatory kinship schemes onto rather fractious indigenous principles and practices as they are found in the context of many cognatic societies (GILLESPIE 2000b: 23).

If Lévi-Strauss himself provides no single, extended account of his theory of house societies nor sets it firmly in the context of his earlier works, it appears to represent at once a less deterministic, rule-bound version of his structuralism, a continuation of the general theory of kinship first outlined in his *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1969 [1949]), and an extension of this theory to cognatic or bilateral kinship systems (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 9).

LÉVI-STRAUSS introduced the notion of *house* as a 'type of social organization' (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987) to be added alongside the common categories of family, lineage,<sup>65</sup> and clan. For LÉVI-STRAUSS the notion of *house* must be understood in the sense in which one speaks of a noble *house*, and it is therefore a type of social organization commonly associated with complex societies. Nevertheless he proposes that this concept might be a useful device for the analysis of elementary societies since *houses* exist there, too (ibid.).

*Houses* are said to be present in societies which are situated in a transitional state between kin-based and class-based organization. These societies have achieved a certain degree of complexity in which kinship is no longer sufficient to organize social life. Nevertheless, these societies have to borrow the 'language of kinship', since there is no other available, to express economic as well as political interests (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 185-187). For LÉVI-STRAUSS *house* societies, therefore, represent intermediary states in the transformation of elementary to

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<sup>64</sup> This citation represents LÉVI-STRAUSS' slightly elaborated definition of the *house* as a social unit, it succinctly encompasses the key common features he observed (cf. LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 174). His definition remains nearly the same in his various publications.

<sup>65</sup> "Unilineal descent groups are regularly called clans or lineages, depending on their vertical depth. Conventionally, lineages are descent groups which are shallow enough for the links between all their members to be known and traceable." (PARKIN 1997: 17-18)

complex structures,<sup>66</sup> a presumption that logically implies the existence of a social hierarchy in *house* societies and one that expresses his evolutionistic understanding of social evolvment (cf. WATERSON 1995: 49).

In his analysis of Kwakiutl social organization, BOAS found that the Kwakiutl employ matrilineal as well as patrilineal principles in structuring their social relations. In accordance with the evolutionistic perspective of his time, BOAS considered the Kwakiutl to be in a state of development, taking them from the prevalence of matrilineal principles to that of patrilineal principles. Confused by his data, BOAS proposes exactly the reverse direction a short time later, now arguing for a prevalence of matrilineal principles. Due to the lack of knowledge of comparable social configurations, BOAS, who later admitted that his ethnographic material did not support the characterization of Kwakiutl society according to unilineal descent principles at all, was forced to resort to an indigenous conception (BOAS 1966: 51, LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 166).

Being unable to explain the Kwakiutl descent group as either an agnatic gens or a matrilineal clan left him with only the indigenous term, *numaym* (*numayma*) to refer to their principal kinship unit, a culture-specific name that had no known counterparts and hence no utility for comparison and explanation (GILLESPIE 2000b: 24).

While reanalyzing BOAS' ethnographic material, LÉVI-STRAUSS compared his insights with Alfred KROEBER'S (1925) investigations concerning the Yurok of California. LÉVI-STRAUSS concludes that in both societies the house is of prominent importance and that it represents an indigenous category of social organization. *Houses* in these two societies served as the principal 'jural entities' (*personnes morales*), which, rather than individuals or families, were the actual subjects of rights and duties. Hence *houses* constituted the principal social agents engaged in long-term exchange and debt relationships with one another (GILLESPIE 2000b: 25).

According to LÉVI-STRAUSS, BOAS and KROEBER failed to understand the nature of social relationships in these societies because their 'institutional arsenal' was incomplete it "did not offer the concept of *house* in addition to that of tribe, village, clan, and lineage (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 174 *my italics*)".

In societies such as the Kwakiutl, in which *houses* are ranked and individual *house* members hierarchically ordered, marriage was 'necessarily' anisogamic and it constituted an important

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<sup>66</sup> "The evolutionary cast of Lévi-Strauss' argument – that complex structures develop out of elementary ones – reappears in his arguments concerning house societies." (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 9)

strategy for perpetuating and increasing the *house* estate. Both marriage strategies, exogamy and endogamy, were practiced concurrently, one to increase access to property and the other to prevent portions of the estate from leaving the house in marriage (ibid.: 182-183).<sup>67</sup> With regard to this explicit emphasis on affinal strategies, marriage becomes the most important social principle in LÉVI-STRAUSS' conception of *houses*; a fact that situates the concept of *house* societies neatly in his former theory of affinal alliance (GILLESPIE 2000b: 26) and yet another proof of LÉVI-STRAUSS' general belief in the structural significance of affinity.

In order to further develop his argument and to highlight that the *house* represents a social category and not merely an architectural form or the locus of a household, LÉVI-STRAUSS turned to medieval and early modern Europe. In their characterization of the noble houses of Europe historians had described the similar kind of social entity that had confounded BOAS and KROEBER in North America.

The medievalist Karl SCHMIED (1957) characterized the medieval house as something quite different from a family or lineage. The noble 'lineage' (*Adelsgeschlecht*) constituting the *house*, does not coincide with the agnatic line and is often devoid of a biological basis, instead consisting of a "spiritual and material heritage, comprising dignity, origins, kinship, names and symbols, position, power and wealth, which once assumed [...] took account of the antiquity and distinction of the other noble lineages" (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 174). LÉVI-STRAUSS points out that in this case, the analytic language of the historian and anthropologist resemble each other.

His [Lévi-Strauss's, B.B.] definition emphasizes the perpetuation of, and the maintenance of an estate by, a *personne morale*, a long-lived entity subject to rights and obligations. The "language" of kinship and/or affinity is employed to achieve these twinned goals by providing the means to legitimate the intact transfer of the estate across generations of house members (GILLESPIE 2000b: 27).

Even though LÉVI-STRAUSS' originally came up with his *house* concept in the context of analyzing patrilineal societies (cf. GILLESPIE 2000b: 28), he later focused his attention on cognatic societies, especially those of Austronesia.

Cognatic kinship systems, in which kinship status is accounted equally through both parents, had for a long time troubled scholars, who, according to the premises of descent theory, were used to identify unilineal principles at the heart of social organization. In addition to the term

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<sup>67</sup> "As was seen in connection with the Kwakiutl, exogamous marriage is used to capture titles endogamous marriage is used to prevent their leaving the house once they have been acquired. It is therefore a good strategy to use the two principles concurrently, according to the time and opportunity, in order to maximize gains and minimize losses." (LEVI-STRAUSS 1982: 183)

‘cognatic’, a whole range of other terms was created to characterize societies, lacking the dominance of unilineal principles, e.g. ‘ambilineal’, when membership in one of the respective lines was selectable; or ‘undifferentiated’ when it was not determined which elements were transmitted through which line (HARDENBERG 2007: 159).<sup>68</sup>

One of the first anthropologists systematically trying to deal with cognatic societies was George Peter MURDOCK (1960). In his introduction *Cognatic Forms of Social Organization* to the collection of papers titled *Social Structure in Southeast Asia* (MURDOCK 1960), MURDOCK differentiated three possible types of cognatic systems. In his differentiation MURDOCK nevertheless followed criteria that resembled the premises of descent theory. These premises led him to classify these nonunilineal societies as either bilateral, quasi-unilineal or ambilineal; terms that all emphasize the aspect of linearity (cf. BERGER 2000: 41, MURDOCK 1960: 13). Anyhow, the classificatory term ‘cognatic’ became increasingly popular in anthropology following the publication of *Social Structure in Southeast Asia* that MURDOCK edited (cf. KING 1996: 106).

Anthropologists dealing with cognatic societies, but still influenced by the paradigms of descent theory, saw the *corporate group*,<sup>69</sup> as defined by British social anthropology, to be the fundamental entity of social organization. Since the concept of *corporate group* was intrinsically tied to the existence of unilineal descent groups, the existence of *corporate groups* in cognatic societies was theoretically precluded. Nevertheless, some scholars (cf. e.g. BARNES 1962) also tried to demonstrate the existence of *corporate groups* in case of cognatic societies. A fact that led some scholars to posit shared territory as a substitute for the unilineal descent principle as a means of limiting group membership (GILLESPIE 2000b: 28).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Other examples of the sometimes rather irritating typologies are: patrilineal but with matrilineal aspects, matrilineal but with patrilineal aspects, bilineal, double descent et al. (GILLESPIE 2000b: 28, MURDOCK 1960: 10).

<sup>69</sup> RADCLIFFE-BROWN considered descent groups to be corporate groups, surviving the lives of their members and often being concerned with common property at some level, whether this was tangible or something more like a cult (cf. PARKIN 1997: 147). FORTES admits that while in theory membership in a corporate group need not stem from kinship, this seems to be the case in Western Africa (FORTES 1953: 30).

FORTES describes RADCLIFFE-BROWN’S concept of descent as being fundamentally a jural or legal notion that *inter alia* regulates the forms of grouping, concerning corporate ownership (DUMONT 2006: 33 [1971]). DUMONT defines ‘corporate’ in this context as meaning “indivisible property which makes a group a moral person” (ibid.). Like LÉVI-STRAUSS and Shelly ERRINGTON I will italicize *corporate group*, to show that its meaning is far from transparent (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 234).

<sup>70</sup> Edmund LEACH, who criticized the concept of unilineal descent groups, “[...]’the structure of unilineal descent groups’ is a total fiction; illuminating no doubt [...] but still a fiction” (LEACH 1968: 302), nevertheless, saw the *corporate group* as the fundamental unit of social organization. In his alternative conception of social units, shared locality and not descent represents the fundamental principle for the recruitment of group members (cf. KUPER 1982: 88).

LÉVI-STRAUSS, still unsatisfied with these attempts at understanding social organization in cognatic societies, proposed that his characterization of the *house* should be applied to all those societies where anthropologists, following the premises of descent theory, encountered analytical problems. LÉVI-STRAUSS saw these problems resulting not only from an incomplete set of structural types but, more fundamentally, from a non-workable substantivist or essentialist orientation to social organization (GILLESPIE 2000b: 28-29).

Part of this orientation was the concept of *corporate group* that was defined according to principles such as descent or residence. LÉVI-STRAUSS indicates that this concept derives from an English jural unit and its juridical application would not match the French equivalent '*personne moral*'. Because of the Anglo-American anthropologists' tendency to assign people to specific *corporate groups*, it had become axiomatic to 'cut up social reality' into groups with bounded and mutually exclusive membership and to classify various kinship practices into 'types' based on the specific principles followed in any single society to delimit such a group (ibid.: 29).

These fundamental assumptions become an analytical problem in societies which trace their kinship relations 'cognatically' or 'bilaterally', as is the case in large parts of Southeast Asia. Here the people appeared to organize themselves into *corporate groups* despite the absence of consistently applied rules. Groupings often have vague or permeable boundaries and recruitment to them often does not strictly follow genealogical or descent lines. Even 'kinship' (in the sense of a belief in shared body substance) sometimes does not feature in either the formation of groups or the reference of what we call 'kinship' terminology (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 235). The indefiniteness and porousness of the group boundaries questioned the groups' function as jural entities as well as the presumed fixity of kin-based social identity (GILLESPIE 2000b: 29).

Staying true to the premises of his structuralism, LÉVI-STRAUSS criticizes the overemphasis of principles used to delimit group membership and express group boundaries. This would undervalue the relationships established and maintained between groups. To him the *houses* of what he considers to be *house* societies become most visible in their interaction with one another (ibid.)

It is thus a dynamic formation that cannot be defined in itself, but only in relation to others of the same kind, situated in their historical context (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987: 178).



Hence, marriage alliance represents the most important relationship linking *houses*.<sup>71</sup> In his examples of *interhouse* alliances, LÉVI-STRAUSS concentrated on ‘Eastern Indonesian’ societies that ritually recognize the importance of social relationships maintained between wife-giving and wife-taking groups; groups that are often referred to by the indigenous term for house.<sup>72</sup> These alliances, and especially the exchange systems that are tied to them, are what create or reiterate an asymmetrical and continuing relationship between *houses* (GILLESPIE 2000b: 30).

Lévi-Strauss’ emphasis on marriage alliance is accompanied by his conception of ‘the *house* as an objectification of a relation’ (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987: 155).<sup>73</sup> The basis of any *house* is represented by the family, which was established by an act of alliance resulting in represented by the conjugal couple. The marriage of the conjugal couple creates a union of conflicting tendencies that are played out in various ways (ibid.). LÉVI-STRAUSS suggests that MARX’S concept of ‘fetishism’ could be applied to describe the house (ibid.),<sup>74</sup> because it can be understood as a manifestation of the relation between wife-givers and wife-takers.

The house projects an outward face of unity - exemplified by the marriage of husband and wife - but this unity is “greatly fictitious” and masks underlying tensions that threaten to fragment it. The house is the hypostatization of the opposition of wife-takers and wife-givers, of the conflicting obligations of filiation and alliance, and of the tangible antagonisms resulting from the differential claims on members of the new family made by the exogamous groups who contributed the spouse. The family is therefore not a substantive phenomenon of unproblematical definition; it is the objectification of contested perspectives and contrary expectations [...] (GILLESPIE 2000b: 30, references omitted).

LÉVI-STRAUSS’ concepts of *house* and *house* society, with their ability to transcend the exclusivity of the hitherto employed anthropological typologies like exo- and endogamy, patri- and matrilineity, or hyper- and hypogamy, by unifying them in a single term, have

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<sup>71</sup> “But while corporate groups, he writes, dissolve under our investigative gaze, marriage alliance emerge, [...] Not descent and kinship, then, but alliance is the place to look to understand social formations.” (ERRINGTON 1989: 236)

<sup>72</sup> “But the significance of “house” is not limited to dwellings as ritual spaces defined by physical structures: many peoples of insular Southeast Asia use the word meaning “house” both for a dwelling and for their society’s major type of grouping. “house”, for example, is the direct translation of the indigenous term used by many Eastern Indonesian societies for their wife-giving and wife-taking groupings. ... In other Indonesian societies where the word “house” does not denote a type of social grouping, the structure and meaning of dwelling often are congruent with local ideas about the polity (as in Luwu) (ERRINGTON 1989: 233-234).

<sup>73</sup> “We believe, to the contrary, that it is necessary to move on from the idea of objective substratum to that of objectification of a relation: the unstable relation of alliance which, as an institution, the role of the house is to solidify, if only in an illusory form.” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987: 155)

<sup>74</sup> “One could, indeed, apply to the house the concept of ‘fetishism’, as MARX applied it to commodities.” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987: 155)

become popular analytical tools for the study of social organization ever since the insufficiency of classic models of kinship studies was acknowledged.

The concepts' inherent flexibility, which principally allows for the selection of the most benefiting rules and institutions out of a repertoire of possible alternatives,<sup>75</sup> was gratefully accepted by anthropologists, who were dealing with cognatic societies and were therefore looking for new concepts that are not tied to the formality and rigidity of the classic anthropological models of kinship and social organization (cf. HARDENBERG 2007: 162).

### **II.1.2.2. Typological and Heuristic Approaches**

In their analysis of papers that (critically) review LÉVI-STRAUSS' concepts of *house* and *house* society and also test its applicability in the context of many different societies (e.g. CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995; ERRINGTON 1989; MACDONALD 1987; WATERSON 1990), GILLESPIE (implicitly) (GILLESPIE 2000b) as well as HARDENBERG (explicitly) (HARDENBERG 2007) conclude that two broad schools of thought can be differentiated. One of these perspectives is concerned with the typological qualities of LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept, the other with its heuristic value (ibid.: 162).

For GILLESPIE (GILLESPIE 2000b), over the years LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept of *house* became detached from his characterization. His characterization describes the *house* as the objectification of the conflicting obligations resulting from descent and alliance that become united in the house as a fetishization of marriage relations (ibid.: 35).

His concept of marriage alliance and the related notion of houses as fetishes have received the most criticism and have undergone extensive revisions (ibid.). Nevertheless this aspect of LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept is still used by many scholars as a starting point for their analysis, and it is still conceived to represent a practical doorway to approach the structural principles of societies in which the house is a prominent indigenous category (RÖSSLER 1998: 452).

The divorce of concept and characterization and their treatment as two separable entities, was, according to GILLESPIE, utilized to widen the possible applicability of LÉVI-STRAUSS' concepts (ibid.: 36; cf. e.g. HEADLEY 1987: 217). Lévi-Strauss' initial proposition of the

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<sup>75</sup> "On all levels of social life, from the family to the state, the house is therefore an institutional creation that permits compounding forces which, everywhere else, seem only destined to mutual exclusion because of their contradictory bends. Patrilineal descent and matrilineal descent, filiation and residence, hypergamy and hypogamy, close marriage and distant marriage, heredity and election: all these notions, which usually allow anthropologists to distinguish the various known types of society, are reunited in the house, as if, in the last analysis, the spirit (in the eighteenth-century sense) of this institution expressed an effort to transcend, in all pheres of collective life, theoretically incompatible principles." (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 184)

house as being both institution and fetish simultaneously, has often been split asunder and considered to refer to two different versions a *house* might take, thus representing two different ‘types’ of society. Some scholars (e.g. HOWELL 1995, 2003; MACDONALD 1987; WATERSON 1990, 1995) have therefore questioned the heuristic value of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ *house*, understood as a specific ‘type’ of social organization (cf. HARDENBERG 2007: 163), while others have focussed their attention on the *house*’s symbolic aspects when it is perceived as an idiom of social groupings (cf. CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995).

### **Typological Approaches**

From an analytic point of view, and following Lévi-Strauss’ formulation of the problem, there would appear to be two possibilities: there are non-differentiated societies in which social and moral unity is found through the House; and there are differentiated societies where such a unity is found primarily in fixed kin and alliance categories and in the relation between these (HOWELL 1995: 151).

Lévi-Strauss promulgated his *house* concept as representing a new classificatory type, found as an indigenous category of social organization in cognatic societies and therefore suitable for their analysis. These societies appeared to lack the existence of abstract kinship principles that would make descent and marriage practices systematically analyzable.

In contrast to his initial application LÉVI-STRAUSS, nevertheless, found that the house was a prominent indigenous category in many ‘unilineal’ societies as well (HOWELL 2003: 27). Especially in Eastern Indonesia he found societies that seemed to possess all the abstract principles necessary for a systematic analysis according to classic kinship typology. On grounds of his assumption, that in all these societies an inherent contradiction between different organizing principles existed and that these principles were predicated upon affinal relations, LÉVI-STRAUSS did not hesitate to employ his concept of *house* in the analysis of these unilineal societies as well (HOWELL 1995: 149-150).

LÉVI-STRAUSS’ random application of his concepts seems to be a problem for many scholars, who refuse to subsume all societies in which the house is found as either an indigenous category, meeting the criteria of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definition, or as expressing conflicts between relationships based on alliance and on descent, under the category of *house* societies. Hence, these scholars question the typological utility of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ concept in their papers.

It seemed to MACDONALD (1987a: 4) an “audacious” act to place the Iban *bilek* ... of Borneo in the same socio-political category as the House of Savoy. In other words, cognitive difficulties

arose due to the lack of fit of “house society” within the existing taxonomy used to divide societies into different types (GILLESPIE 2000b: 40 original italics).

A further problem regarding anthropological typology, is that LÉVI-STRAUSS’ conception, in which the *house* is perceived to blur traditional but now indefensible kinship categories and to span what is actually a continuum from unilineal to cognatic principles, would, in fact, encompass most of the world’s known societies.<sup>76</sup>

This classificatory problem is epitomized by the fact that scholars such as CARSTEN, GIBSON, and HOWELL all point out, that there is some confusion whether we are to consider the cognatic societies of Indonesia or those with descent groups and asymmetrical alliance, as paradigmatic of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ ‘type’ (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 18).

For Signe HOWELL (1995), LÉVI-STRAUSS does himself a disservice by including in his category of *house*(-based) societies a random selection of societies predicated upon very different ideological constructs, just because the house is of prominent social and symbolic significance. She points out that, as a result of including both ‘types’ of Indonesian societies in his analyses, the analysis of both societies would suffer (ibid.: 150).<sup>77</sup> Because LÉVI-STRAUSS, himself, applied his concept of *house* in such a broad variability of contexts, it is commonly seen as having no typological value.

These problems expose a great conceptual dilemma of typological orientation to social organization. In many typological approaches, societies and their constituent units are classified into what are presumed to be mutually exclusive essentialist types, defined on the basis of one feature or a constellation of features, to be compared and contrasted on that basis. PFEFFER (1992) emphasizes the importance of culture-specific forms of classifications in anthropological approaches that seek to investigate ‘meaningfulness in a cross-cultural comparison’ (PFEFFER 1992: 43). These culture-specific forms must be comprehended as constituting wholes. This holistic approach concentrates on elements and their relationships in a specific cultural order that has to be compared as a whole to other such wholes. When anthropology’s task is understood as the cross-cultural comparison of meaningfulness then any attempt of defining universally applicable typological categories, based on isolated structural features becomes futile (cf. HARDENBERG: 2007: 165).

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<sup>76</sup> “In the end the problem is not one of discovering which societies are ‘house societies’ but of discovering which ones are not.” (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 18)

<sup>77</sup> “For a long time I was confused by LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definitions of ‘house’, especially in the chapter on Indonesia. I now feel that my confusion might mirror his own. His insistence on ‘house’ as mediating a universal conflict of relations between descent and affinity arose, perhaps, not so much out of the ethnographic material on the Kwakiutl, or even the Iban and other Borneo societies, but out of his own lifelong concern with elementary structures.” (HOWELL 1995: 261)

A further, and frequently-made point of criticism is that LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept of *house*, of which he spoke as an alternative to traditional kinship categories, nevertheless privileged kinship as the most fundamental social relationship and it also derived from the very essentialist approaches and categories he, himself, criticizes. GILLESPIE concludes, that LÉVI-STRAUSS was thus unable to move beyond the limitations imposed upon him by the concepts he used (GILLESPIE 2000b: 41).

While houses may receive indigenous emphasis in very many societies, their cultural and geographic diversity suggests that the 'type' will always be far too heterogeneous to constitute an analytic model. This can hardly be surprising if the notion of 'house society' simultaneously attempts to resolve the problems of both descent-group and alliance models whilst still relying upon them (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 19).

### **Heuristic Approaches**

In their introduction to the collection of papers *About the House: Lévi-Strauss and beyond* CARSTEN and HUGH-JONES (1995) describe their approach as an attempt to move beyond the limitations of LÉVI-STRAUSS' *house* concept, when it is understood, solely, as a new classificatory 'type'.

In their edited book, different scholars utilize LÉVI-STRAUSS' ideas concerning the house, to focus on processes and practices in which the house serves as an idiom for social groupings. In looking at particular societies through the house, these scholars hope to escape the constraints of conventional analytic categories. CARSTEN and HUGH-JONES'S collection represents a paradigmatic example of the heuristic stream of analyses, in which scholars apply LÉVI-STRAUSS' concepts because of its presumed explanatory value (HARDENBERG 2007: 162).

Though each explores different facets of the house, taken together our essays suggest that the real value of LÉVI-STRAUSS' idea lies not so much in the creation of a new, unwieldy social type to complement or nuance already threadbare categories of traditional kinship theory but rather in providing a jumping-off point allowing a move beyond them towards a more holistic anthropology of architecture which might take its theoretical place alongside the anthropology of the body (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 2).

A 'house-based approach' is seen to move beyond the limitations of traditional typological distinctions. Instead of distributing Indonesian societies according to the classic typology, scholars as ERRINGTON (1989: 237-238) and Roxana WATERSON (1995: 48) emphasize that it might be a more useful approach to consider the various kinds Indonesian societies as 'variations on a theme'. With reference to LÉVI-STRAUSS' treatment of myths as variant sets, Indonesian societies may be understood as transformations of each other, whose common

feature is the importance of the house as a focus of social organization. Taking a house-centric perspective might enable the analyst to resolve the ambiguities of kinship systems found in Indonesia, despite the tremendous variation in the scale and complexity of these societies (ibid. 47-48).

This wide range of socio-political differences cannot be accommodated by traditional classificatory conceptions that consider egalitarian, ranked, and hierarchical societies as noncomparable; yet, in an anti-taxonomic approach they all can be better comprehended by examining the role of the house as a central fundamental organizing principle (GILLESPIE 2000b: 43).

Part of this ‘heuristic approach’ is the realization that *houses* are not always best considered as kinship or descent groups. Different scholars working on Southeast Asian societies noted that coherent and permanent social entities were better characterized as ritual and/or political units that may or may not coincide with kin-defined groups (cf. GILLESPIE 2000b: 45).

This conclusion is linked to the main premise of CARSTEN and HUGH-JONES’ ‘heuristic approach’, according to which houses must be understood in their totality. In this approach, the house is symbolically linked to the cosmos, society and body, and the “language of the house” is thought to represent an alternative to the “language of kinship” (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 19). By the same token, houses must be viewed as living and developing entities just like the people who inhabit them. Accordingly, this view of the house is firmly grounded in indigenous conceptions. In much of the world, houses are believed to be endowed with spirits and souls, and they are conceived as living beings whose different parts often are labeled by the same terms as those given to human body parts (GILLESPIE 2000b: 47).

### **II.1.2.3. Gillespie’s Conclusion**

After GILLESPIE has shown that the house – understood as a fetishization of conflicting principles – represents the starting point for most studies dealing with ‘*house societies*’ in Southeast Asia, she concludes her review of approaches to LÉVI-STRAUSS’ conception with a recommendation to safeguard his definition, rather than subsume the *house* of LÉVI-STRAUSS within the general rubric of a ‘language of the house’.<sup>78</sup> GILLESPIE states that many scholars have simply broadened or rejected LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definition, because it did not fit the particular society under investigation. Therefore, they would have lost the really important aspects of his conception (GILLESPIE 2000b: 47).

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<sup>78</sup> Gillespie, solely, calls for the return to Lévi-Strauss’ original definition and not to the attached static notion of *house* as a classificatory type (GILLESPIE 2000b: 22).

For GILLESPIE, staying true to LÉVI-STRAUSS' initial definition holds several advantages for the analyst, since LÉVI-STRAUSS' definition, with its emphases on *houses* that socially and spatially constitute a *personne morale*, would enable the analysts to include cases in their consideration in which the house represents a residence that is not always shared by all house members, and cases in which it is not a domicile but a shrine, or a sacred place that may constitute a fusion of both functional categories. In these cases, LÉVI-STRAUSS' definition is appropriate to investigate situations in which house membership does not govern the domestic or economic activities; where membership may, rather, be expressed primarily on ritual or ceremonial occasions (ibid.). This latter point alludes to an important aspect of ERRINGTON'S conception of *houses* in island Southeast Asia, viz. their primary functioning as ritual centers. The idea of houses as ritual centers is also present in Clark CUNNINGHAM'S (1973 [1964]) classic structural analysis of an 'Eastern Indonesian' house, as it is presented in his article *Order in the Atoni house* (ibid.: 205).

The most important point for GILLESPIE, nevertheless, seems to be that instead of stressing the relationship of alliance and descent as conflicting principles which become united in and expressed by the house; LÉVI-STRAUSS' definition stresses the importance of hierarchy between and within houses. Hierarchy is thus understood as representing the essential feature of *house* societies. According to GILLESPIE, it seems to be the usefulness of the house in highlighting hierarchical relations within and between houses, that represent the primary advantage of staying true to LÉVI-STRAUSS' definition (GILLESPIE 2000b: 49).

WATERSON (1995), nevertheless, points out that LÉVI-STRAUSS nowhere explicitly mentions that hierarchy, in the sense of social inequality, is an essential aspect of his conception of *house* societies. She therefore proposes that a society need not be highly stratified in order to be conceived of as a *house* society (WATERSON 1995: 51, 56). This statement does not exclude the possibility that hierarchy, in the DUMONTIAN sense<sup>79</sup>, is nonetheless present.

Thus the definition of "house" inevitably leads to consideration of the constitution of "house societies" in which hierarchy is a paramount feature. (GILLESPIE 2000b: 49)

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<sup>79</sup> "It is clear, however, that DUMONT is not talking about hierarchy in the usually accepted sense of the term: that is, he is not referring to social stratification, nor to any other sort of ranking system, nor to the hierarchy of a scientific taxonomy, nor to mere inequality of status, though these may be expressions of it. It concerns rather the attribution of value that accompanies or occurs in any differentiation." (PARKIN 2003: 42)

#### II.1.2.4. Hierarchy and ‘Types’ of Houses

One of the first attempts to apply LÉVI-STRAUSS’ *house* concept to more detailed ethnographic studies of Southeast Asian societies was undertaken by a group of scholars associated with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris. In their collection of papers named *De la hutte au palais: sociétés “à maison” en Asie du Sud-Est insulaire* (MACDONALD 1987), these scholars propose that within this area of the world (western Island Southeast Asia), the house as a *personne morale* is clearly associated with hierarchy, and the more hierarchical the society (up to the level of kings and their palaces), the greater the likelihood of discerning *houses* meeting the criteria established by LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definition. Because there is a great deal of variation within the region, with societies ranging from highly stratified to egalitarian, these scholars consider it essential to distinguish the different manifestations of *house* societies (GILLESPIE 2000b: 36).

These assumed variations lead Charles MACDONALD to differentiate between the more hierarchical societies, where the *house* represents a ‘concrete group’, the *personne morale* of LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definition, which he terms *maison-institution*; and the *house*, not as a concrete group but as a symbolic representation, the *maison-fétiche*. Both representing two distinguishable ‘types’ of society (ibid.; MACDONALD 1987a: 5).

In his conclusion to *De la hutte au palais*, HEADLEY (1987: 214), modifies MACDONALD’S revision and suggests that the *house-institution/house* fetish dichotomy should be considered endpoints on a comparative spectrum of *house* societies ranging from ‘strong’ to ‘weak’, which roughly correspond to the scale of hierarchy from stratified to egalitarian. In HEADLEY’S conception ‘weak’ implies that these societies fail to meet the definitional criteria set by LÉVI-STRAUSS, but that the *house* remains a useful concept for their analysis (cf. GILLESPIE 2000b: 36).

HEADLEY proposes that in rice-growing peasant societies of Java and Malaysia (which are both located in ERRINGTON’S conceptual space of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’), the *house* is present in its fetishized form.<sup>80</sup> In HEADLEY’S conception these ‘weak’ societies are part of a larger and complex socio-political system that may also include ‘strong’ *houses* (HEADLEY

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<sup>80</sup> GILLESPIE notes, with reference to ERRINGTON (1989), that the house as fetish or representation has been applied to both extremes of the sociopolitical hierarchy, the ‘strong’ as well as the ‘weak’ ends of the spectrum. In highly stratified states, the royal palace metaphorically extended to encompass the entire polity as a similar fetishistic image, but on a much larger scale (GILLESPIE 2000b: 215).



1987: 217).<sup>81</sup> The difference between these two forms of conceptualizing the *house* seems to be the referent that objectifies the *house*, a concentrated and perpetuated estate in ‘strong’ *houses* and the transitory personification of a family’s ‘siblings’ in lower ranked groups (ibid.: 215).

In the latter societies, the idiom of consanguinity (expressed as ‘siblingship’) maintains the identity of a house as a kin group and allows it to be extended far beyond the household. The extensive use of the idiom of siblingship expresses and maintains the identity and the intimacy of the family’s *house*, and simultaneously extends it to encompass the entire village. However, the extension of siblingship, i.e. of consanguinity, always assumes an implicit view of marriage and hence incest (ibid. 210).

For HEADLEY the subtle and complex interrelation of a society’s representation of these three realities - incest, marriage, and siblingship - is the crux of his understanding of the Southeast Asian *house*. In the case of the densely-populated lowland societies of Java and Malaysia, the *house* becomes the container and is inside vis-à-vis the non-consanguineous outside world (ibid.).

The simplest classification of the different *houses* found throughout Insular Southeast Asia would rest, according to HEADLEY, on their respective capacity to include decreasing numbers of members of the society. The *houses* at the ‘strong’ end of the continuum represent a ‘total social organization’, encompassing the entire realm. Then there is a middle spectrum, represented by the coastal Borneo sultanates, in which the *house* includes all those associated with princely power. And finally the ‘weak’ end of the scale, the central Javanese and Malaysian peasants, where inclusion is total,<sup>82</sup> concerning all individuals, but fragile because the idiom of siblingship is based not on a permanent social organization but on the temporary inclusion through marriage in the nuclear family, into a phantasmagoric *house* (ibid.: 217).

HEADLEY, thus, realizes that in Southeast Asian societies different conceptions of *houses* could exist side by side in a single society, that ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ *houses* may represent related extreme points of a single socio-political system (ibid.: 214). It is important to note that the *house* conception of the villagers/commoners, without direct relationships to the high

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<sup>81</sup> “Finally at the weak end of the scale, by virtue of the idiom of siblingship, one finds some Malaysian peasant groups, and central Javanese peasants near the former centers of princely power, Yogyakarta and Surakarta.” (HEADLEY 1987: 217)

<sup>82</sup> Total, here, means the principal possibility to include fellow compound residents as well as entire hamlets, through the idiom of siblingship, although the focus of social organization is represented by the nuclear family (cf. HEADLEY 1987: 216).

court, hence representing its periphery, may vary from the conception of the high court and the attached noble families, representing the center.

In the former case, at the ‘weak’ end of the continuum, the *house* appears abstract and metaphorical and is used to articulate social relations. At the ‘strong’ end, the center is often a stable object, such as a temple, a palace or a set of regalia (ERRINGTON 1989: 239). The proposed continuum between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ societies, therefore relates not only different societies, but also links different groups and social strata within a single society, representing different conceptional levels of a single ideology that are hierarchically related.

#### **II.1.2.5. Discussion**

My exploration of the *house* as an analytic concept has shown that it was intended by LÉVI-STRAUSS to overcome the restrictions of classic anthropological categories, especially those associated with descent theory, to provide an analytic framework for the systematic study of cognatic societies. The main reason was, that in these societies organizing principles that were traditionally conceived to be mutual exclusive and that were used to classify societies according to essentialist ‘types’, seemed to exist in parallel and to be of equal importance.

LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definition (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 174) of the social institution he termed *house*, emphasized its corporate character and the essentiality of hierarchy as an organizing principle of *house* societies. Furthermore, it is the existence of hierarchy that identifies them as intermediates between elementary and complex structures, simultaneously uniting the commonly opposed principles of descent and alliance in a single social system.

Again we find the notion of an intermediate that relates two extremes in a LÉVI-STRAUSSIAN model. Like the marriage with the patrilineal cross-cousin that relates restricted and generalized exchange, the *house* shares features of elementary and complex structures and again this sharing is used to indicate a transformation from one to the other and to relate both structurally (cf. WATERSON 1995: 49, 67).

LÉVI-STRAUSS’ concept of *house* societies was criticized because he presented it as a new analytic category, a new ‘type’ of society, for which he claimed universal applicability. According to the general belief in the futility of universal kinship categories (cf. PFEFFER 1992), LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definition has been largely dismissed and a major reason for this dismissal was his reliance on the traditional categories of kinship studies which he originally intended to overcome. Kinship categories like cognatic and unilineal societies and their

analytical distinction became just as much questioned<sup>83</sup> as a bounded anthropological field termed kinship studies (ibid.: 42).

However, LÉVI-STRAUSS' characterization of the *house* as a symbolic structure that expresses cultural images of unity is adopted by many anthropologists working on Southeast Asia and its relevance as an indigenous conceptual category is well affirmed. Therefore, anthropological studies benefited from a house-centric perspective not only in those societies in which the house is important as an affinal category and where the indigenous term for it resembles the term for the major social groups which are related in a system of generalized exchange. As already indicated, and as the exploration of ERRINGTON'S conception of the House in island Southeast Asia will show, houses are eminently important symbolic structures that express the unity of ritual groups and frequently contain the central sacred objects or persons. ERRINGTON'S comparative approach to island Southeast Asian societies focuses on the ways Houses express the valuation of marriage and cross-sex siblingship, and the importance of both principles to achieve and maintain the House's unity as a ritual center.

Furthermore, the house's symbolic structure must be perceived as an important aspect in the process of transmitting socio-cultural messages and meaning. As will be discussed later, the spatial order of the house features prominently in indigenous classification systems and it might represent the key structure in the anthropologist's attempt to unlock the cultural code and decipher messages that are communicated in a culture-specific manner.

The house may also represent an appropriate medium to investigate whether different strata of a single socio-politic system share the same ideology. As indicated by HEADLEY, houses may be metaphors for state-like and vertically structured entities expressing hierarchy on one societal level, while on the next it may be a metaphor for an entire village community which imagines its unity by means of lateral inclusion based on the premises of siblingship while expressing a valuation of equality.

[...] I shall argue that the 'house' concept is open to ideological exploitation in a great range of social formations, and it is in fact quite possible to find examples where the 'house' is an important unit among noble and commoner strata of society. While the 'house' can clearly be exploited for purposes of social differentiation, it can also – and still more powerfully – be used in the attempt to create a legitimating and apparently 'natural' unity in which the house of rulers are conceived as 'encompassing' those of their followers. (WATERSON 1995: 53)

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<sup>83</sup> For example, NEEDHAM (1966) argues that “[...] cognatic recognition of relatives is common to all societies and characteristic of none” (ibid.: 29). Emphasizing that in societies with unilineal descent groups, as in those without them, kinship ties are recognized bilaterally (cf. KING 1996: 107).

Apart from the justified criticism that LÉVI-STRAUSS' concept has attracted, I argue that the house and a house-centric approach nevertheless represent an important aspect of contemporary anthropological investigations. Anthropologists, especially those who identify themselves as proponents of structural analysis – often deemed unfashionable – can gain invaluable insights when the house is acknowledged as an important aspect of studying “meaningfulness in intercultural comparison” (PFEFFER 1992 my translation).

Overall, the house seems to be of general importance to the social organization of Southeast Asian societies and I believe that it represents a promising perspective for their analysis when it is combined with the theoretical premises of DUMONT'S perspective, as proposed by HARDENBERG (2007).

## ***II.2. ERRINGTON'S MODEL OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA***

Two major variations in the idea of unity and its differentiation into brothers and sisters, men and women, exist in island Southeast Asia. These two variations are expressed in and partially constructed by two major variations in the marriage-cum-political systems of the region (ERRINGTON 1990: 53).

In accordance with her differentiation between the definition and the characterization of the LÉVI-STRAUSSIAN *house*, GILLESPIE states that the latter has received far more criticism and revision than the former, which has often been ignored completely. A common complaint concerning his characterization is that LÉVI-STRAUSS highlights marriage alliance in the hypostatization of the house as a fetish uniting opposed principles, while excluding other key signifiers of house unity. For GILLESPIE, it is especially the principle of siblingship, which itself is intimately related to the predominant cognatic kinship systems in regions like Southeast Asia that is too often ignored by scientists (GILLESPIE 2000b: 37).

In accordance with GILLESPIE'S criticism, CARSTEN (e.g. CARSTEN 1987, 1995a), in her analyses of a Malay fishing village on the island of Langkawi, emphasizes the relevance of siblingship and the maintenance of oppositions between social categories that become manifested in the house's structure.

In Langkawi while the tension of alliance is clearly evident in exactly the terms described by LÉVI-STRAUSS, the house cannot be said to unite these opposing principles. Notions about kinship and community involve complex elision of such oppositions: they become more or less irrelevant where marriage occurs by definition between those who are 'close', [...] However, there is a tension between alliance and siblingship and a tendency to exclude affinal relations from the house. Rather than resolving opposition between affinity and siblingship, the house in Langkawi seems only to succeed in subordinating one principle to the other depending on the context (CARSTEN 1995a: 127).

In this example, although houses are used as a symbolic device to represent social groups, they do not resolve an opposition between descent and alliance as LÉVI-STRAUSS suggested. The house must be seen in terms of siblingship which is, in this case, a more important principle than either alliance or descent (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 27).

Nevertheless, siblingship and marriage are inseparably related. Siblingship and marriage are thought of as representing transformations as well as the opposition of one another. CARSTEN (1995a) as well as Thomas GIBSON (1995), show that in many cognatic Southeast Asian societies, the married couple is thought of in terms of both affinity and siblingship. In these cases marriage often occurs between real or classificatory cousins who call each other by sibling terms. Marriage between houses is thus transformed into siblingship within the house. In this way the house represents not only siblingship but also marriage (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 38-39). Therefore, I believe it to be more adequate to think of marriage as encompassed by siblingship in the sense of a DUMONTIAN hierarchical opposition, in which one part stands for the whole at a superior level (see chapter II.1.1.1.). The relationship of cross-sex siblings therefore contains aspects of both consanguinity and affinity in these societies.

As HEADLEY'S as well as CARSTEN'S analyses indicate, siblingship is the most important principle of social organization that dominates conceptions of relatedness in cognatic societies of Southeast Asia. Shelly ERRINGTON takes the indicated importance of siblingship in Southeast Asian societies to the next level. Her characterization of island Southeast Asian societies rests on the premise that the idiom of siblingship represents the central symbolic principle.

If *Eastern Indonesia* can be thought of as a vast sociosymbolic elaboration of the fact that "brothers" and "sisters," being different, must part, then the *Centrist Archipelago* societies that allow endogamy can be regarded as a vast sociosymbolic elaboration of the fact that "brothers" and "sisters," being similar, must come together (ERRINGTON 1987: 436-437, original italics).

Despite the reluctance of scholars, such as MACDONALD (1987a: 4), to classify seemingly dissimilar societies together under a single category labeled *house* societies, and the resulting demand for, at least, two distinct categories, other scholars, such as WATERSON (1995), conceive of *house* societies as constituting a continuum with rather egalitarian societies, like the Moken boat nomads on one end and explicitly hierarchical societies, as the late imperial Japan, on the other. In her perception these two societies are understood as representing the extreme ends of a continuum, where the *house* as the primary symbol of social organization

represents the common theme, and where at both extreme ends the *house* appears in its most abstract form (ibid.: 68).

Between these extremes, WATERSON locates the societies of Indonesia, in which the literal dominance of the house as a physical structure and a grouping of kin are inescapably obvious. In accordance with her perception of the house and LÉVI-STRAUSS' treatment of myths, WATERSON regards the Indonesian societies as transformations of each other (ibid.: 48).

This perception of Indonesian societies as transformations of a common theme was introduced by Shelly ERRINGTON (1987).<sup>84</sup> In her paper *Incestuous Twins and the House Societies of Insular Southeast Asia* (ERRINGTON 1987), ERRINGTON presents her characterization of insular Southeast Asia, which she, for purposes of explication, divides up into two conceptional areas, 'Eastern Indonesia' and the 'Centrist Archipelago' (ibid.: 404). This characterization is further elaborated in her book *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm* (ERRINGTON 1989), in which ERRINGTON uses several of LÉVI-STRAUSS' observations in her structural-symbolic (cf. ATKINSON/ERRINGTON 1990: x) effort to compare island Southeast Asian societies (ERRINGTON 1989: 237).

Based on LÉVI-STRAUSS' ideas, ERRINGTON recasts the conceptualization of societies in this area. According to her characterization, 'Eastern Indonesian' societies are practicing asymmetric alliance, while the 'Centrist Archipelago' is constituted by "preferentially endogamous "cognatic" societies (ERRINGTON 1987: 403)" with a centripetal marriage system (ibid.: 404).

With reference to the classic 'structuralist' studies of VAN WOUDE (1968 [1935]), P.E. DE JOSSELIN DE JONG (1951) and, of course, LÉVI-STRAUSS (1969 [1949]), ERRINGTON states that the relations between *houses* and marriage systems in 'Eastern Indonesian societies' have been explored extensively. For the societies of the 'Centrist Archipelago', in contrast, the relationship between *houses* and marriage systems remains largely unexplored. Therefore, ERRINGTON focuses on the latter, with the goal of elucidating their principles of social organization and to show that the "ways their ['Centrist' and 'Eastern Indonesian' societies', B.B.] marriage systems, ostensibly so different, are transformations of each other (ERRINGTON 1987: 405)."

The difference between the areas that best accounts for their surface difference and underlying similarity, I think, is that the "House" or primary structural social groupings in each have a different relation to each other and to society as a whole (ERRINGTON 1987: 405).

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<sup>84</sup> Actually ERRINGTON elaborates on an idea by HOCART, who recognized that the political formations of the hierarchical polities of island Southeast Asia are transformations of each other (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 28).

Both sources (ERRINGTON 1987, 1989), and the attached division of island Southeast Asian societies, are continuously mentioned by scholars discussing the concept of *house* societies in Southeast Asia (e.g. CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 24; GILLESPIE 2000a: 13, 2000b: 29, HARDENBERG 2007: 163; HOWELL 1995: 152; RÖSSLER 1998: 439), marking ERRINGTON'S conception as one of the most stimulating exegesis and applications of LÉVI-STRAUSS' ideas in the Southeast Asian context.

Some of these authors praise ERRINGTON'S characterization (e.g. CARSTEN 1995a: 122, CARSTEN/HUGH JONES 1995: 24-25, RÖSSLER 1998: 439), others criticize it (HARDENBERG 2007: 163), whereby most of them provide a brief outline of ERRINGTON'S "synthetic model" (CARSTEN/HUGH JONES 1995: 24). But none of the authors gives a detailed review of her two conceptual spaces or their relation; her overall characterization seems to be accepted without being investigated. Her comparative model is commonly reduced to the insight that both conceptual 'types' of society are transformations of each other which share the principles of dualism and centrism (ibid.: 25). The relevance of these principles and the appropriateness of ERRINGTON'S premises remain unexplored. I argue that this kind of presentation raises more questions than it answers since it fails to demonstrate the essential aspects of ERRINGTON'S comparative model and the way her model affirms and adds insights to the study of island Southeast Asian forms of social organization. Especially ERRINGTON'S emphasis on the importance of the house as a ritual center, the attached valuation of unity and the eminence of cross-sex sibblingship is lost in these short allusions.

Additionally, these brief references to ERRINGTON'S model leave no room for detailed criticism. The way CARSTEN (1995a: 122-125 ), CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES (1995: 24-25, 28) and RÖSSLER (1998: 439, 449) refer to ERRINGTON'S model indicates a general acceptance of her premises. Only HARDENBERG (2007) doubts the usefulness of ERRINGTON'S analytic 'types' by identifying them as too ambiguous. Therefore, he questions her overall attempt of comparing societies on the basis of her model (ibid.: 163). Nevertheless, an exploration of this ambiguity and of her entire comparative approach remains largely neglected. I believe that an exploration of her comparative model, which presents the premises of her approach in detail, is a relevant contribution to the anthropology of houses in island Southeast Asia.

### II.2.1. MEANING AND POWER IN A SOUTHEAST ASIAN REALM

ERRINGTON'S book initially represents a study of and commentary on traditional concepts of Luwu Buginese, living in southern Sulawesi.<sup>85</sup> Her ethnography focuses on the cultural ideas and social practices of a single extended family, whose members all belong to a high-ranking core group.<sup>86</sup> ERRINGTON characterizes her book as being in line with the 'ethnographies of the old style' (cf. above), which attempt to lay out some of the most pervasive organizing themes that the ethnographer has perceived and experienced in another culture in order to paint a vision of that society in broad strokes (ERRINGTON 1989: 26).

The second major aspect of her book is a comparative approach to social organization in island Southeast Asia. While discussing Luwu concepts, she often points to the cultural ideas of other Southeast Asian populations she regards as similar. Her most frequent comparisons, however, are with Java and Bali, as described by ANDERSON (1972) and GEERTZ (1980), both of which she characterizes as 'hierarchical centrist states', just like Luwu. Occasionally, her comparisons are with centralized states of mainland Southeast Asia, such as Siam<sup>87</sup> or Burma and with the specific non-hierarchical populations such as the Iban of Sarawak or the Ilongot of the Philippines.

All of these forms of argument are set within a central thesis that argues that the Luwu of Sulawesi constitute a centralised state of Indic origin whose closest congenitors are Bali and Java. The "parent" of this remarkable perception and of the book itself is, as ERRINGTON readily acknowledges, Benedict ANDERSON'S essay, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Society."<sup>88</sup> On this perception, ERRINGTON builds an even more remarkable dichotomy that divides most of island Southeast Asia between a "Centrist Archipelago" that extends from Java to Luzon, embracing the Malay Peninsula in the West and Halmahera in the east, and "Eastern Indonesia," which stretches from Lombok to Aru (FOX 1991: 988).

In her analysis of Southeast Asian societies, ERRINGTON focuses on the importance of the House as a kin group as well as politico-religious entity and I think her approach meets the demands of CARSTEN and HUGH-JONES' claim for a "more holistic anthropology of architecture (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 2)" which links the architectural, social and symbolic aspects of houses.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> "Traditionally thought of as the oldest of the South Sulawesi kingdoms, Luwu was located at the head of the Gulf of Bone, with its capital at Ware', close to modern-day Palopo." (CALDWELL 1991: 109)

<sup>86</sup> Errington admits that her understanding of Luwu culture is largely based on a view from the top. (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 22)

<sup>87</sup> Since ERRINGTON refers to the classic polities of mainland Southeast Asia, it is more appropriate to talk of Siam (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 66) instead of Thailand (cf. FOX 1991: 988), which is, at least theoretically, tied to such ideas as the nation state, constitutional monarchy and 'democracy'.

<sup>88</sup> (ANDERSON 1972)

<sup>89</sup> In this approach the category of house encompasses all kinds of dwellings, and even structures, whose primary function is not the habitation of living persons, like graves, shrines and temples.



According to the arguments in LÉVI-STRAUSS' paper *Do Dual Organisations Exist?* (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1963 [1956]), ERRINGTON characterizes island Southeast Asian societies according to their employment of dualism and centrism. She describes 'Eastern Indonesian' societies as underlain by a principle of 'concentric dualism' which she, following LÉVI-STRAUSS, contrasts with the 'simple dualism' or 'reciprocal dualism' of moiety systems (ERRINGTON 1987: 405). In contrast with 'Eastern Indonesia', the societies of the 'Centrist Archipelago' are conceived as exhibiting strong centripetal tendencies in marriage (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 24), and highlighting a symbolic and ritual center. ERRINGTON terms this form of organization 'dualistic centrism' (ERRINGTON 1989: 266).

ERRINGTON'S stated goal is to show that these two seemingly different forms of social organization are in fact transformations of each other, that they constitute a continuum based on a common theme. Both principles, that of dualism and that of centrism, are present in 'Eastern Indonesia' as well as in the 'Centrist Archipelago' (CARSTEN/HUGH-JONES 1995: 25) and ERRINGTON identifies the idiom of siblingship as the primary symbolic device coding these structural principles in both 'types' of society.

Even though the 'Centrist' societies emphasize high ranking Houses as centers, symbolically encompassing the whole society, these centers are, nevertheless, shot through with dualism between 'Us', inside the House, and 'Them', outside the House. This differentiation is equivalent to the differentiation of kin and non-kin. In 'Centrist' societies the paradigmatic relationship symbolizing the unity of kin is the relationship of the cross-sex sibling pair.<sup>90</sup> This sibling pair constitutes the House's center and therefore symbolically represents inter-House unity.

On a different ideological level, within these hierarchical 'Centrist' societies, status differences are coded by the idiom of siblingship as well. Commoners are forbidden to marry 'siblings', whereas nobles employ different patterns of 'sibling' marriages in their struggle of maintaining or gaining status. On this level, the idiom of cross-sex 'siblingship' is used to express hierarchy which marks the relationship of commoners and nobles and identifies their relationship as a structural dualism.

In the case of 'Eastern Indonesian' societies, the separation of cross-sex siblings is emphasized in one generation, only to attain their reunion in another. The dual opposition of brother and sister and their initial separation at marriage ensures the whole exchange between

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<sup>90</sup> Male same-sex siblings are, in the absence of clearly stated succession rules, potential rivals.

Houses, hence attaining inter-group solidarity by means of asymmetric alliance (cf. above). The principles of duality and asymmetry seem to pervade every aspect of social organization in 'Eastern Indonesia'.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, the delayed reunion of the sibling-pair in the persons of their *n*th-degree<sup>92</sup> children ensures that the House is periodically conceptualized as a center representing primordial unity. The status of the House in 'Eastern Indonesia' is dependent on its capacity to constitute a temporary center, and therefore ritually encompasses Houses that lack this capacity (cf. MCKINNON 1995).

We thus find centrism and dualism as constitutive principles in different contexts, or on different ideological levels in both 'types' of society. According to her 'holistic' approach, ERRINGTON discusses the relevance of these constitutive principles in architectural, symbolic as well as social contexts. She emphasizes the idiom of siblingship as a means to structure ideas of relatedness, expressing differing conceptions of centrism and dualism that on the one hand divide insular Southeast Asian societies, but on the other unite them as transformations of each other.

For ERRINGTON, the adoption of LÉVI-STRAUSS' conception of *house* societies, and its application to Indonesian social formations, would encourage us to see the very strong underlying similarities between those societies that are commonly distinguished by means of an anthropological typology that rests solely on descent principles (ERRINGTON 1989: 238). In her characterization of island Southeast Asian social formations as Houses, ERRINGTON highlights the latter's conception as worship communities and the attached importance of perpetuating a service group for its ritual center, the House (ERRINGTON 1987: 406). It is in the context of the perpetuation of the ritual center that ERRINGTON stresses the importance of marriage and, therefore, LÉVI-STRAUSS' models of affinal alliance (ERRINGTON 1989: 240). The combination of GEERTZ'S and ANDERSON'S idea of a ritual center with LÉVI-STRAUSS' analytic concepts makes ERRINGTON'S approach a structural-symbolic analysis (cf. ATKINSON/ERRINGTON 1990: x).

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<sup>91</sup> For Rodney NEEDHAM (1979: 55) the 'Eastern Indonesian' societies, with their lineal systems and prescriptive affinal alliances, exemplify what he calls a correspondence of structure between symbolic and social order, such that one may speak of a single scheme of classification under which both are subsumed, which he terms dual symbolic classification.

<sup>92</sup> This way of displaying genealogical depth is used by ERRINGTON (1987, 1989), who follows KEESING (1980). KEESING, writing about similar Pacific terminologies, labels full siblings 'zero-degree siblings', first cousins 'first-degree siblings', second cousins 'second-degree siblings', and so forth. Zero- to *n*th-degree siblings, ranging from full siblings to distant cousins, form one generational layer (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 209).

### II.2.1.1. The House in Island Southeast Asia

What is central (if I may so put it) to the House in island Southeast Asia – what defines the service grouping as an entity – is not the periphery, the “social group,” but the center. (ERRINGTON 1989: 239)

In addition to the constitutive principles suggested by LÉVI-STRAUSS such as alliance and exchange, ERRINGTON suggests that the House is a profoundly centered entity throughout island Southeast Asia, consisting of a ritual center and a serving group. The ritual center is often constituted by a stable object, such as a temple, a palace, or a set of regalia and is regarded as the descendant or visible remains of an ancestral ‘root’ or ‘source’ (ibid.: 239). This center is conceptualized as representing a primordial state of unity and oneness, a mythical state and it is this center that unifies the House as a worship community.<sup>93</sup>

The center is never exchanged or sold and retained by the serving group. Since it does not enter relations of exchange, it is metaphorically stable or still. The service group, caretakers, or worship community of the center consists of humans who die and who consequently must recruit other humans to maintain the service group, if the central object is to be served in the future. Worship communities may recruit members by adopting them from other Houses or through conquest. The most common mode of recruitment to the service group is to give birth and in most of island Southeast Asia birth ideally requires a prior marriage (ERRINGTON 1989: 239).

The service group forms the periphery around its central objects and since it consists of humans who die and breathe and move around, the periphery is metaphorically and usually literally more mobile than the center (ibid.). The immobility of the ritual center makes Houses in island Southeast Asia metaphorically stable and centered entities, that are opposed to a mobile ‘human’ periphery. The dualism between center and periphery, therefore becomes a paradigmatic aspect of ERRINGTON’S conception of Houses in island Southeast Asia.

LÉVI-STRAUSS points out that the House is a bundle of contradictions, or at least ostensibly incompatible principles [...]. Many of these contradictions cease to trouble if we look upon the House as a centred worship community, [...] (ERRINGTON 1987: 406).

In the case of the hierarchical ‘Indic States’ with their regalia and temples, where hierarchically superior houses ritually encompass inferior ones, and where the ruler’s House

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<sup>93</sup> The perception of houses as worship communities, instead of kinship groupings, is, according to ERRINGTON, better qualified to describe the constitution of social groups in island Southeast Asia, where conceptions of shared body substance are often lacking (ERRINGTON 1987: 406).

metaphorically encompasses the whole society, a conceptualization representing them as centered spaces seems quite obvious. In the case of ‘Eastern Indonesia’, however, where Houses are commonly characterized by their explicit exertion of dualism<sup>94</sup> (cf. e.g. CUNNINGHAM 1973 [1964],<sup>95</sup> KANA 1980), or in the case of the non-hierarchical ‘hill tribes’ of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’,<sup>96</sup> where longhouse compartments are conceived as Houses, a conceptualization of them as constituting centers becomes more fractious.

In order to show that her conception of Houses as ritual centers is also valid for those societies that are commonly classified as representing the opposition<sup>97</sup> to the ‘Indic States’, the so called ‘hill tribes’ of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’, ERRINGTON refers to the Iban<sup>98</sup> of Sarawak (Borneo). The Iban *bilek* (a longhouse compartment), represents the primary House grouping in this society that is not hierarchical in DUMONT’S sense, since every *bilek*<sup>99</sup> represents an equal center and there seems to be no ritual encompassment (ERRINGTON 1989: 256).

The *bilek* is a “House” by LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definition and by my modification of the House as a worship community of *pusaka*, inherited precious objects and people (ERRINGTON 1987: 414, my italics).

Summing up, I argue that ERRINGTON departs from Lévi-Strauss conception of *houses* in her discussion of island Southeast Asian societies. It is with respect to the assumed indigenous hierarchy<sup>100</sup> of contexts/levels that her departure from LÉVI-STRAUSS becomes most obvious.<sup>101</sup> LÉVI-STRAUSS identifies the *house* as an objectification of conflicting principles

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<sup>94</sup> Ever since F. A. E. VAN WOUDE’S book *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia* (1968 [1935]), Eastern Indonesian dualism has been commonly conceived of as being asymmetric, implying that one pole is hierarchically superior to the other. VAN WOUDE’S book is part of a larger project representing the main focus of the ‘Leiden school of anthropology’, where in the 1930s, inspired by the French ‘sociologists’ DURKHEIM and MAUSS (cf. FOX 1980: 3) and their *Année Sociologique*, a Leiden professor, J.P.B. DE JOSSELINE DE JONG, started a project to analyze Eastern Indonesian societies, which were thought of as constituting a ‘field of ethnological study’ (FES) (cf. for example P.E. DE JOSSELINE DE JONG 1984). The ‘Leiden School’s’ analytical perspective is commonly referred to as ‘Leiden structuralism’, of which VAN WOUDE’S thesis is an early example. This is the structuralism that ERRINGTON identifies as being invented based on studies of the Indonesian context (cf. above).

<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, CUNNINGHAM throughout his study emphasizes the importance of the house’s center and its relevance in the ritual context (e.g. CUNNINGHAM 1973 [1964]: 216).

<sup>96</sup> For a case study of a society living in the area conceived by ERRINGTON as constituting the ‘Centrist Archipelago’, but not fitting into her conceptualization, see HOWELL’S discussion of the Chewong (e.g. HOWELL 1985, 1989 [1984], 2003: 32).

<sup>97</sup> One of ERRINGTON’S claimed goals is to neutralize the conceived opposition between ‘hill-tribes’ and ‘Indic States’ in the ‘Centrist Archipelago’.

<sup>98</sup> Her primary source is Freeman’s ethnography *Report on the Iban* (1970).

<sup>99</sup> “The *bilek* is a “House” by LÉVI-STRAUSS’ definition and by my modification of the House as a worship community of *pusaka*, inherited precious objects and people.” (ERRINGTON 1987: 414, my italics)

<sup>100</sup> This terminology derives from, and is used in accordance with, the ideas of Louis DUMONT.

<sup>101</sup> DUMONT, himself, uses the term ‘level’ instead of context when examining the relationship of ideological components. Levels imply, for the culture under study, a specific type of social and ideological organization characterized by the separation of different levels, in which elements are not to be understood solely in their mutual opposition, but simultaneously with their relative position to a third element – a value (cf. ITEANU: 1985:

associated with affinal relations, and therefore, most important in the context of marriage, which he, according to his theory of affinal alliance, perceived as the supreme context of non-modern ideologies or elementary structures. By contrast, ERRINGTON highlights the Houses' conception as ritual centers representing primordial unity and their corresponding association with dead ancestors. It can thus be argued that the supreme and most encompassing ideological level in ERRINGTON'S model is ritual.

Consequently, I regard ERRINGTON'S emphasis of ritual and the attached importance of the House as a ritual unit, to be the central conclusion of her entire argument. Nevertheless, this central aspect of ERRINGTON'S model remains largely unexplored in the hitherto existing interpretations. None of the above mentioned authors touches on the importance of the House in ritual contexts or its transcendence of the opposition of affinity and descent. In addition they do not mention the attested inseparability of marriage and cross-sex siblingship, the key social relationships of ERRINGTON'S model. I believe both points to be essential and the most valuable insight of ERRINGTON'S study which have the potential of adding a further dimension to upcoming studies of Southeast Asian societies.

### **II.2.1.2. Coding Difference in Island Southeast Asia**

In sum, this way of understanding relationships encodes two types of difference. One is the difference in seniority. Senior generational layers are supposed to be superior in authority to junior ones. [...] The other is the difference in sex, which, paradigmatically, is the complementary difference between brother and sister. Throughout the area, brothers and sisters are allies and are supposed to be mutually helpful and have long-lasting bonds of affection. So strong is this bond that it is a paradigm and model for the husband-wife bond (ERRINGTON 1990: 48).

ERRINGTON claims the existence of an universal idea of 'power' in island Southeast Asia that emanates from an ancestral source and splits, in myth, into two types of difference: one hierarchical, coded by age, and one complementary, coded by gender (ERRINGTON 1990: 41). 'Power' is, thus understood differently than in the Euro-American conception where it is assumed to denominate a secular relation between people. For island Southeast Asia, ERRINGTON highlights the nonsecular conception of 'power' that expresses intrinsic connections between cosmic powers and human life. In the classic Southeast Asian polities, 'state power' was organized around the acquisition or demonstration of superhuman powers

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91). "DUMONT'S levels, by contrast, are clearly welded together into a whole in a manner that is both segmentary and hierarchical. Although the ideology is unitary, it is divided into levels. Moreover, the relationship between these, and between each level and the whole, is hierarchical." (PARKIN 2003: 59)

by state dignitaries; powers that were believed to link human society with natural and cosmic energies (ibid.: 41).

These two contrasting ways of coding difference, one based on age and one based on gender, are the essential aspects of ERRINGTON'S entire understanding of social organization in Southeast Asia, and, as I will argue, the source of some logical ambiguities and contradictions in her argument. I will argue that these ambiguities and contradictions result from her failure to define her perception of complementarity and hierarchy and her omission to situate her perception in a theoretical paradigm.

### **Seniority and Hierarchy**

ERRINGTON identifies relative age, or better, seniority as the primary symbolic differentiation between people in the whole Malayo-Polynesian area. Societies are said to imagine themselves as having their origin in a unitary 'source', root, or point of origin. The unitary ancestral source, moving through time, divides into generational layers of 'siblings' and each layer of 'siblings' is further away from its primordial source (ERRINGTON 1989: 205).

This scheme divides the people whom one calls by relationship terms in successive strata of "siblings". [...] Sibling sets succeed each other through duration as a sort of elementary structure in this part of the world (Errington 1989: 209).

With reference to Hildred and Clifford GEERTZ'S studies on kinship in Bali (1964, 1975), ERRINGTON demonstrates how the principle of seniority is used to express hierarchy in Bali and Luwu. In these societies relative age works on two ideological levels simultaneously. On the first level, relative age is employed to structure relationships between generational layers or within these layers. On the second level, the recognition of seniority is employed to differentiate commoners and nobles and to structure the allocation of followers (ERRINGTON 1989: 191-231).

Bali and Luwu exemplify what, according to ERRINGTON, represents a general feature of social organization found throughout island Southeast Asia; a primary symbolic differentiation between people, based on relative age (ibid.: 204-205).<sup>102</sup>

This differentiation, based on the principle of seniority, occurs on a dimension that ERRINGTON identifies as being 'hierarchical'. A relation that that she contrasts with

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<sup>102</sup> PFEFFER (1992: 46) points out, that relative age is an important relation to articulate elaborate forms of social classification in non-western cultures.

‘complementary’<sup>103</sup> (ibid.: 206). ‘Hierarchical’ is perceived, by ERRINGTON, in the sense of DUMONT’S conception of sacred hierarchy,<sup>104</sup> stressing that the status ‘higher’ ritually encompasses the status ‘lower’ (ibid.: 140). In accordance with this perspective, seniority being of higher status, is seen as an image of difference, a criterion of difference, and an organizer of terms indicating difference (ibid.: 206).

Generational layer, what we could call symbolic age is the dimension of difference that, elaborated, becomes the dimension of prestige, authority, and hierarchy in this area (ERRINGTON 1990: 43).

According to ERRINGTON, the principle of seniority is realized in different ways in insular Southeast Asia, depending on the respective society’s particular form of social organization. In ‘Eastern Indonesia’, for example, Houses [often labeled ‘patrilineages’ (cf. MCKINNON 1995: 172-173)] representing units of exchange, relate to each other as ‘older brother’ and ‘younger brother’, where the former ritually encompasses the latter (ERRINGTON 1989: 206). ERRINGTON identifies generational layers forming the inchoate structures of authority even in the most level and unranked ‘Centrist’ societies in which relations are traced bilaterally. According to the indigenous conception, people in senior generational layers should protect and direct those in junior ones, while junior people should respect and obey their seniors. In the more hierarchical<sup>105</sup> societies of island Southeast Asia, and in the cases of noble families especially, generational layers become overlaid, but not displaced, by

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<sup>103</sup> According to DUMONT’S perspective, the concept of complementarity implies the notion of symmetry where the two poles are of essentially equal status. Their unequal status is an arbitrary superadded feature following cultural conventions. The notion of complementarity expresses, for DUMONT, an essential feature of modern ideology, viz. equality. To the contrary, hierarchy implies the notion of asymmetry and of essentially unequal status, where the superior, representing the whole encompasses the inferior, representing a part. Hierarchy, thus, expresses an essential feature of non-modern ideology. This explanation of the difference between complementarity and hierarchy is, of course, taken from DUMONT’S classic discussion of the relationship between the right and left hand in modern society (DUMONT 1986: 248).

<sup>104</sup> “It is correct to say that the opposition between pure and impure is a religious, even a ritualistic, matter. For this ideal type of hierarchy to emerge it was necessary that the mixture of status and power ordinarily encountered (everywhere else?) should be separated, but this was not enough: for pure hierarchy to develop without hindrance it was also necessary that power should be absolutely inferior to status.” (Dumont 1972: 114)

<sup>105</sup> In this context, different usages of the term hierarchy must be distinguished. In its ‘common’ usage hierarchy refers to social stratification, which might be defined as ‘unequal access to things’ (PARKIN 2003: 163), or any sort of pure ranking system. This common usage, must be distinguished from DUMONT’S conceptions of hierarchy. According to WATERSON, DUMONT considers hierarchical principles on an abstract level (WATERSON 1995: 56). In this abstract conception, which might be called his ‘formal model’, hierarchy is seen as a heuristic device, stressing the inseparability of the operations of distinguishing and valuation. For him the attribution of value accompanies or occurs in any differentiation (PARKIN 2003: 42). DUMONT’S other conception of hierarchy refers to the application of the term hierarchy in particular situations, whereas some societies express hierarchy as a value and oppose it to equality. In the latter case hierarchy, as a ‘formal model’ is present too, since the differentiation of hierarchy and equality inevitably includes valuation and therefore ‘formal’ hierarchy (PARKIN 2003: 44). Following DUMONT’S model, several ethnographers have managed to discuss hierarchical relations

institutionalized structures of inheritable prestige (*ibid.*). All societies throughout island Southeast Asia have an implicit, albeit unenforceable, authority structure, where people may be differentiated by wealth or inherited rank, but they nonetheless sort themselves into seniors and juniors on the basis of their belonging to a specific generational layer (*ibid.*: 212).

Hierarchical difference has as its metaphorical and often literal basis the elaboration of seniority versus youth. Hierarchical ‘Centrist’ societies thus employ the concept of seniority on an additional ideological level, too – in politics. The political systems of hierarchical ‘Centrist’ societies are based on *entourage*<sup>106</sup> groupings, in which followers and supporters are largely drawn from relations that are junior by either status or generation (*ibid.*: 219). Nobles and commoners are thus distinguishable by their methods of tracing their descent and their conceptions of genealogical eph. Commoners, who practice *teknonymy*,<sup>107</sup> create ‘genealogical amnesia’ by actively inhibiting genealogical knowledge and systematically suppressing the past (*ibid.*:191). The lack of genealogical depth makes commoners inevitably junior in respect to the nobles, who keep long genealogies that locate them in time and in the social hierarchy through their remembered links with dead ancestors. The importance of an ancestral source – constituting a mythical center – is inseparably connected to a conception of the past. It is this diachronic dimension in contrast to the commoners’ shallow and synchronic perspective which relates the nobles with the mythical source thus making them senior and, therefore, ritually encompassing (*ibid.*: 219-231).

The past, in the sense of dead ancestors, is a source of potency, and ancestral names are means of access to it for descendants. [...] And so noble genealogies, which at first glance appear to constitute the structure of the past and to remember its contents as higher and higher levels of spiritual potency are reached, deplete the past of historicity. “The past” means: potency (ERRINGTON 1989: 230-231).<sup>108</sup>

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within symbolic systems of Indonesian societies without any reference to economic or power relations, or their implications for individuals in the system cf. BARNES ET AL. (1985) (WATERSON 1995: 56).

<sup>106</sup> With reference to Lucien M. HANKS’ studies on Thailand (e.g. HANKS 1975), ERRINGTON identifies the *entourage* as the paradigmatic type of social grouping found in Southeast Asian societies with internal ranking (ERRINGTON 1989: 104). “An *entourage* is a group focused on a single person. [...] As the *entourage* arises out of personal loyalty to the patron, group spirit is lacking in the Western sense. [...] An *entourage* endures only as long as a patron is able to continue providing for his clients. [...] The *entourage* is a face-to-face group for living in common proximity. [...] Finally, an *entourage* is a nonspecialized unit in the sense that it can function successively in a variety of ways, rather than continuously in a particular way.” (HANKS 1975: 200-201) The extension of the *entourage*, which HANKS terms the ‘circle’, represents the entire range of persons who respond to a man’s summon (*ibid.*: 202).

<sup>107</sup> *Teknonymy* refers to naming practices where the address terms identify persons with reference to their children, like father/mother of x.

<sup>108</sup> The concept of potency represents a major focus of ERRINGTON’S study, which cannot be reviewed in detail. Nevertheless, I would like to acknowledge the usefulness of ERRINGTON’S conception, which is inspired by ANDERSON’S (1972) description of Javanese ‘power’, for the understanding of similar conception of ‘power’ or ‘potency’ in Thailand. Here a short definition must suffice. “This “power” is not the abstract relation familiar to



### **Siblingship and Complementarity**

As shown above, ERRINGTON identifies relative age to be the structural principle that encodes hierarchical or status distinctions in island Southeast Asia. In ERRINGTON'S conception of the Malayo-Polynesian world, where seniority is conceived to signal hierarchical distinctions, gender is understood to signal complementary distinctions (ERRINGTON 1989: 214). This assertion is stated without a further elaboration of her conception of complementarity.<sup>109</sup>

For the whole region, ERRINGTON identifies the brother-sister pair as representing the paradigm and icon of the male-female relationship. This is a conception that obviously contrasts with the Euro-American conception, where the paradigmatic male-female pair is commonly conceived to be personified as husband and wife (*ibid.*).

Brothers and sisters, in short, code complementary dualism in these Malayo-Polynesian societies that are otherwise predicated on non-complementary distinction; and brothers and sisters indeed form a cross-sex pair bearing a heavy symbolic load throughout Malayo-Polynesia, although its intensity varies (ERRINGTON 1989: 214).

The symbolic importance of siblingship for island Southeast Asian societies is manifested and emphasized in various socio-cultural contexts. One of ERRINGTON'S exemplary case studies is the spectrum of reactions attached to the birth of opposite-sex twins in Bali (*ibid.*: 232; 1987: 403). The attitude towards the birth of opposite-sex twins differs according to the status of the

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us but cosmic energy, which could be accumulated by states and still is sought by individuals. This "power" or spiritual potency is itself invisible; people infer its presence by its signs." (ERRINGTON 1989: 10)

<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately the limited space of this thesis excludes the possibility of discussing the appropriateness of conceiving the relationship between cross-sex siblings in terms of complementary opposition. At least in the case of the conjugal pair, ERRINGTON seems to contradict herself when she describes the relationship between husband and wife in Luwu, as one of hierarchical encompassment of the latter by the former (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 288). The contradiction arises, maybe, because ERRINGTON does not explain her conception of complementarity. For a short insertion I would like to point to DUMONT'S recurring discussion of complementary and hierarchical opposition (e.g. 1980: 239-245). If DUMONT'S perspective would be adopted here, the relationship between brother and sister becomes consequentially hierarchical. I believe this to be correct, since the primordial unity of brother and sister (cf. ERRINGTON 1987: 415) can be seen as constituting the whole that transcends their distinction and represents the encompassing value on a superior level (cf. ERRINGTON 1990: 53). Nevertheless, on the inferior level of their distinction, the particular hierarchy between brother and sister has to be qualified, since hierarchy presupposes a superior pole. Either way, scholars disagree about the 'nature' of oppositions, some see no difference between complementarity and hierarchy (e.g. BARNES 1985: 14), others see hierarchy to be a "peculiar form of complementarity" (NEEDHAM 1987: 102; FORTH 1985: 115) and other scholars, working on Indonesia, contrast complementarity and hierarchy in their paper's title only to propose their "inextricable intertwinedness" in the conclusion (TRAUBE 1989: 341). A similar conception is adopted by Gregory FORTH, another anthropologist working on Indonesia, who proposes that hierarchical and complementary opposition exist simultaneously within a single society, nevertheless, with the NEEDHAM-like assumption that hierarchy may best be viewed as a function of complementarity, as a kind of super-added feature (cf. FORTH 1985: 113-115). Similarly James FOX (1989), in his discussion of Eastern Indonesian dualism, claims the inappropriateness of DUMONT'S concept of hierarchy, and instead identifies recursive complementarity and categorical asymmetry as the structuring principles of Eastern Indonesian dualism (*ibid.*: 51-52).

parents.<sup>110</sup> In the case of commoners, the birth is conceived to represent an inauspicious event that results in a ritual purification of the parent's village, the dismantling of their house and finally the banishing of the parents and twins. The birth of opposite-sex twins to high nobles, in contrast, is greeted with great joy. The difference between high- and lower-status people in reception of twins rests on the belief that the twins<sup>111</sup> had contact amounting to marital intimacy before birth, in the mother's womb, which is a very meaningful and auspicious thing for high caste princes and priests, for whom it is claimed that the boy was born like a god, who brought his wife with him out of the mother's womb. According to the same cultural logic, commoner twins, far from the gods, were considered incestuous (*ibid.*). A similar observation is made by Janet HOSKINS (1990) who concludes for the 'Eastern Indonesian' Kodi, that at the level of gods, male and female are fused into one, but in merely human practice, men/brother and women/sister must be separated for the purpose of exchange between Houses (ERRINGTON 1990: 51).

Indeed, an old theme in Southeast Asian scholarship is that the higher an entity's status, the more fusion, or undifferentiation, it can appropriately exhibit [...] (ERRINGTON 1990: 51).

ERRINGTON states that, since 'siblingship' is the most prominent feature of relationship terminologies in island Southeast Asia, it is not surprising that brothers and sisters have a special place in the symbolism and practice of marriage throughout this area. With the exception of those societies that prohibit the marriage of any 'relative', the spouse is mythically and ritually a substitute for the cross-sex sibling, from whom one must part because of the 'incest taboo' (ERRINGTON 1989: 237).<sup>112</sup> This statement implies, logically, that the relationship between husband and wife should resemble that between brother and sister.

In contrast to this logical deduction, ERRINGTON describes the husband as more potent than his wife. In Luwu, for example, he is the center of the relationship, the encompassing, the unmoving, and the more dignified. The wife, in contrast, is the more active, the spokesperson representing her husband's periphery. Her very activity reveals her inferior potency, because activity and practicality bear an inverse relation to dignity (*ibid.*: 288).

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<sup>110</sup> ERRINGTON refers to Jane BELO's material concerning customs pertaining to Twins in Bali, gathered in the 1930s (cf. BELO 1970 [1935]).

<sup>111</sup> Unless noted, twins means opposite-sex twins.

<sup>112</sup> ERRINGTON sees the 'incest taboo' not as a universal, in LÉVI-STRAUSS' sense (cf. above), but as a local one that people follow and that regulates marriage (ERRINGTON 1987: 432).

Founding myths throughout the region commonly emphasize the cross-sex sibling pair in the context of marriage (ibid.: 243). In island Southeast Asian societies the brother-sister pair stands as an icon of primordial unity. In some contexts it is elaborated that they are the issue of a single 'source' or root. The botanical metaphor whereby siblings are conceived of as stems from a common clump or root is a recurring theme of many origin myths, which describe the relationships between members of social units and especially between siblings. According to this conception, cross-sex siblings form a single entity who should always act in accord (ERRINGTON 1987: 415). The variations of the mythological themes featuring cross-sex siblings are manifold, but all stress the sexual relation of cross-sex siblings or the lack of it. The eventual parting of the cross-sex sibling pair is equivalent to the original fracture of unity that brings about the world's events and begins human history (ERRINGTON 1990: 51). ERRINGTON'S references to the cross-sex gender relations sometimes seem to contradict one another. Principally, she characterizes the cross-sex relationship as complementary. During her discussion she, nevertheless, gives examples that characterize the relationship as being either complementary in the case of cross-sex siblings, hierarchical in the case of the conjugal pair, or unitary in the case of rulers, ancestors/spirits and gods. Especially when she is referring to the relationship of siblingship and marriage it becomes unclear how she classifies the paradigmatic cross-sex gender relation and which quality this relation ought to have in her model.

Suffice it to say that in insular Southeast Asia, brother and sister (male and female) exemplify unity with two aspects rather than, say, two separate energies that are in eternal *complementary* opposition (as in New Guinea; cf. STRATHERN (ed.) 1987) (ERRINGTON 1987: 429 my italics, 1989: 265).<sup>113</sup>

The Balinese example indicates how the hierarchical relationship between commoners and nobles is expressed via the idiom of siblingship. Nevertheless, as indicated above, the utilization of siblingship to mark status differences<sup>114</sup> seems only possible when it is conceived in the context of marriage.

I think that this observation supports the argument that marriage and siblingship are inextricable intertwined in island Southeast Asian societies, which might in turn resolve some

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<sup>113</sup> This citation appears in both of ERRINGTON'S publications (1987, 1989). In her later book (1989: 265), the concept of complementarity has been removed from the passage. This might be seen as proving the indicated inconsistencies in her argument, viz. between the proclaimed complementarity, the described hierarchy and the asserted unity of the sexes.

<sup>114</sup> When differentiated from 'generation differences' (cf. Errington 1989: 219).

ambiguities of ERRINGTON'S argument. It must be explicitly stated that, in island Southeast Asia, siblingship and marriage and, therefore, the relationship between the two elementary but commonly (at least in the 'West') opposed cross-sex gender relations cannot be analyzed on their own. Their culture-specific meaning evolves out of their relation to one another and out of their relation to society as a whole. This is expressed in the indigenous conception whereby an ancestral source (a whole) fractures and splits, creating difference between brother and sister.

Complementarity in this part of the world is expressed and coded as difference in sex, in male and female; but the icon and paradigm of sex difference is not husband and wife but brother and sister, the pair into which, in origin myths throughout the area, the original unitary source of potency split (ERRINGTON 1990: 47).

### **II.2.1.3. Marriage in Island Southeast Asia**

The following chapter provides a summary of the paradigmatic features that ERRINGTON identifies in her classification and typology of island Southeast Asian societies based on their marriage patterns.<sup>115</sup> Marriage constitutes one of the two major analytical contexts of ERRINGTON'S model (cf. CARSTEN 1995a: 122) and this chapter will, in addition to an examination of her general classification, focus on the different forms of marriage patterns that Errington identifies to be paradigmatic for her 'types' of society. Accordingly to her premise that the proof for seeing Southeast Asian societies as transformations of each other is to be found in their marriage patterns (ERRINGTON 1987: 405), I will present a compilation of these patterns.

#### **'Eastern Indonesia'**

According to ERRINGTON'S classification, 'Eastern Indonesian' societies employ asymmetric alliance in marriage. The thus engendered distinction of wife-givers and wife-takers is accompanied by paired dualistic contrasts and complements that pervade their symbolic classification systems. Relationship terminologies in 'Eastern Indonesia' divide people into generational layers, but they also divide them into seemingly 'unilineal' Houses (ERRINGTON 1989: 206-207).

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<sup>115</sup> For a better understanding of ERRINGTON'S data on 'Eastern Indonesia', my discussion is supplemented by details from other anthropologists who have published studies on societies that might be classified as belonging to this 'type'.

The latter division, coupled with aspects of their marriage practices, gives a 'lineal' cast to their terminology that obscures its fundamental relationship with and similarity to the terminologies in the other major grouping of island Southeast Asia (ERRINGTON 1989: 207).

'Eastern Indonesian' societies sort out all four types of 'cousins' into different Houses and different categories,<sup>116</sup> only those belonging to the same House are conceived of as 'true siblings'.<sup>117</sup> The 'Eastern Indonesian' Houses are exogamous, and kinship terms for the people outside Ego's own House, often vary according to the sex of Ego. These terms express the structured affinal relationships between Houses. Since people of the same generational layer are supposed to marry each other (as is the case throughout most of the 'Centrist Archipelago'), people are well aware of the generational layers of people in other Houses with which their House has affinal relations (ibid.: 210).

The image of the House as a fetishization, objectification or solidification of affinal relations is, for Errington, in the case of 'Eastern Indonesian' societies especially apt. Here, the House's existence is predicated on its function as a node mobilizing valuables to be exchanged at marriage. It also illustrates the fundamental importance of the conjugal pair as the basis of social organization, for Houses exist in order to exchange, and the 'excuse' for exchange of valuables is people, mainly sisters, who leave their brothers' Houses to wed in other Houses and form conjugal pairs. The logic of this exchange system is predicated on the necessity of marriage between, rather than within Houses (ibid. 236).

The *Eastern Indonesian* system of multiple Houses engaged in exchange of sisters and valuables with each other is predicated on the fact that there are two sexes: without two sexes, there would be no rationale for separation, and therefore none for the exchange of valuables (ERRINGTON 1978: 434 original italics).

Here ERRINGTON stresses the structural importance of the conjugal pair for social organization, and as already indicated above, it is again in the context of cross-sex gender relations that ERRINGTON's argument becomes ambiguous. This time, the accentuation of the conjugal pair in 'Eastern Indonesian' societies seems to conflict with her general emphasis on siblingship, as constituting the basic principle of social organization, that constitutes the common theme. I believe that this seemingly contradictory statement could be resolved if the

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<sup>116</sup> At this point, ERRINGTON states that siblings in an Eastern Indonesian house consist only of what anthropologists call patri-parallel cousins (ERRINGTON 1989: 210). This statement assumes all 'Eastern Indonesian' societies to be patrilineal. In his critical review of ERRINGTON'S book, FOX (1991) states that this is a simplification, exemplifying the stereotypes of the 1930s literature. More recent research has documented the existence of 'Eastern Indonesian' societies that are organized around a core of women, where men must marry out (ibid.: 989).

<sup>117</sup> 'True siblings', here, refers to 'cousins' from zero to the *n*th-degree, belonging to the same *house*.

existence of different ideological contexts or levels, in the sense of DUMONT, is acknowledged. His model of hierarchical opposition and the associated concept of reversal would allow for the importance of both cross-sex gender relations – siblingship and marriage – since they could be located on different ideological levels within the same ideology. This would resolve the logical contradiction, arising when both principles are conceived of as mutually exclusive on the one hand and as located on the same ideological level on the other.

In addition to the already introduced relationship terminologies, ERRINGTON'S division of island Southeast Asian societies rests, principally, on two paradigmatically different marriage patterns. Thereby 'Eastern Indonesian' societies are said to follow the politics of exchange. Implying that the refusal of endogamy, perceived as in-House marriage, engenders a system of generalized exchange where the affinal relationship between any two Houses is fixed, leading to a system of asymmetric alliance. The Houses are to one another wife-givers and wife-takers, a fixed relationship that never becomes reversed.

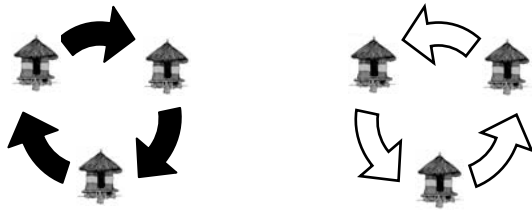
This emphasis on exogamy, that separates the cross-sex sibling pair, makes it harder for these societies to fit into ERRINGTON'S idea of Indonesian Houses as centered social spaces, where a serving group of humans represents the periphery around some kind of regalia or sacred person that constitutes the ritual center (ERRINGTON 1989: 240). Nevertheless, ERRINGTON stresses the general validity of her model and emphasizes its applicability in the 'Eastern Indonesian' context.

In 'Eastern Indonesia', women are considered to be the source of life exchanged between Houses. They are given in one direction only, hence engendering what is called the 'flow of life' (FOX 1980: 12).<sup>118</sup>

But the very notion of alliance implies a direction to the flow of life since it is women who are perceived as the providers of life. [...] This "flow of life" is synonymous with the transmission of a women's blood, the vital fluid that, united with semen, produces the human person (FOX 1980: 12).

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<sup>118</sup> For NEEDHAM (1979: 37) the opposed classes of gifts that flow between the *houses*, feminine goods (including women) in the one and masculine goods in the other, are symbols for the regular mode of asymmetric relationships that articulate the social as well as symbolic classification of 'Eastern Indonesian' societies and that he contextualizes under the analytic category of dual symbolic classification.

Figure 2. Schematized model of the 'Eastern Indonesian' 'asymmetric connubium'<sup>119</sup>A. Flow of 'life'<sup>120</sup>

B. Flow of 'male' valuables

Because women are not allowed to reproduce within their natal-Houses, they are sent away to other Houses to marry men other than their natal-House 'brothers'. In order to create a marriage, valuables are exchanged between wife-giving and wife-receiving Houses, reversing the flow of women. A woman gives birth to children who 'belong' (because of the exchanged valuables) to the children's father's House and not to their mother's House. Female children, like their mothers before them, must eventually leave their natal-House 'brothers' to go to yet another House to marry and reproduce. The male children, like their fathers, remain fixed in their natal House and they receive other Houses' 'sisters' as their brides.

As a result of this exchange system, boys and men of different generations share one House. They do not share this common House because of being related by 'blood' or body substance, but because valuables have been exchanged for their mothers by their natal Houses. The House, therefore, may be regarded as a sort of legal relation rather than a relation based on shared body substance. The male House members have blood relations not to their natal House members, but to their mother's natal Houses, currently occupied by her 'brothers'. Therefore, the Houses of their mothers and not their 'own' Houses/Houses of their fathers represent their source of life (ERRINGTON 1989: 241).

A person's mother's "brother" becomes his or her local and immediate root, *pu*, or source of life in the preceding generation. People share body substance with others who are outside their natal House (ERRINGTON 1989: 242).

Implicit in the conception that blood/life is transmitted in the female line, is the idea of a return or reunion of blood/life. The 'blood/life' that a brother and a sister share can be

<sup>119</sup> It was VAN WOUDE (1968 [1935]) who introduced the term 'asymmetric connubium' referring to the system of marriage alliances found in 'Eastern Indonesia', a conception that is identical with J.B.P. DE JOSSELIN DE JONG'S (1977 [1935]) conception of 'circulating connubium', and one that pretty much resembles LÉVI-STRAUSS' (1969 [1949]) conception of generalized exchange (cf. e.g. BLUST 1980: 220, 205).

<sup>120</sup> Together with the women 'female' valuables flow in one direction only, hence constituting the 'flow of Life' between houses (ERRINGTON 1989: 269).

restored only by the marriage of their children or the descendants of their children. In other words, the life that a sister takes with her when she marries may be returned to her brother's House through her daughters (Fox 1980: 12-13). This delayed reunion of the cross-sex sibling pair is of major importance for the logical consistency of ERRINGTON's model.

ERRINGTON identifies men of 'Eastern Indonesia' as being part of two worship communities in different respects and on different occasions: one centers at their natal House's regalia, hence orienting them 'inward', 'towards the center', and 'up'; the other is oriented to their mother's 'brothers' natal House and orients them 'sideways', 'up' and 'back', to their own mother's natal House and back through its mother's 'brothers' Houses and so on to their ancestral source.

This splitting of loyalties in a man's worship community obligations is only one of the splits that give almost all Eastern Indonesian ritual activity a dualistic cast (ERRINGTON 1989: 242).

The pervasiveness of centrist and dualistic symbolism in ritual as well as social action prompted LÉVI-STRAUSS (1967: 168-169 [1963])<sup>121</sup> to argue that 'Eastern Indonesian' societies exhibit 'concentric dualism' (ERRINGTON 1989: 242).

Thus the "preferred marriage" is not a marriage between people standing in a particular genealogical relation to each other, but a union or reunion between Houses. A marriage between members of two Houses that already stand to each other as wife-giver and wife-taker, or as "mother's brother's House" and "sister's son's House," reconfirms the unitary sibling relation between the bride's and groom's respective parents, who are each other's "brother" and "sister" while it nonetheless maintains the overall structure of duality whose existence the separateness of the House both ensures and represents (ERRINGTON 1989: 268).

As this citation indicates, ERRINGTON sees the supreme reason for exchange not in the separation of cross-sex siblings but in their unification. It is the unification of the cross-sex sibling pair in the person of their *n*th degree 'children' that recreates a mythical state of unity in the present, indicating and constituting the House's ritual potency.

### **The 'Centrist Archipelago'**

[...] these societies, especially the former Indic states, practice a politics of the center rather than a politics of exchange; the structural twist, in which marriage tend to be in-House in order to consolidate the center, rather than outside the House, which promotes exchange and makes it

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<sup>121</sup> This paper's initial question is emblemized in its title, *Do Dual Organizations Exist?* (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1963), and is answered by LÉVI-STRAUSS with his conclusion that probably all societies, where dual organization has been identified, employ a fusion of three concepts, diametric dualism, concentric dualism and triadism, whereby dualism, exemplified in symmetric exchange, represents an extreme form of triadism, exemplified in generalized exchange, and concentric dualism represents the intermediary state signalling the transformation from the former to the latter (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1967b: 167-168 [1963] my translation).



impossible to consolidate a center, tends to obscure the relevance of alliance theory and marriage as the basis of social order. Moreover, the House in Indic States coincides with the State itself, which gives it a somehow more solid and corporate groupish aspect, even if that is ultimately illusory (ERRINGTON 1989: 237).

‘Eastern Indonesia’ was well-known in anthropological theory because asymmetric alliance and unilineal descent groups were a prominent feature of social organization in societies constituting this analytic category. These societies achieved early prominence in the classic work of J.P.B. DE JOSSELIN DE JONG (1977 [1935]). In contrast the cognatic societies of island Southeast Asia, which are in fact demographically preponderant, were neglected for a long time (cf. KEMP/HÜSKEN 1991: 1). The ‘Centrist Archipelago’ is ERRINGTON’S attempt to conceptualize these societies in a single analytic category and facilitate their analysis.

The ‘Centrist Archipelago’ is a hitherto unnamed conceptual space, located in the conglomeration of islands rimming mainland Southeast Asia, stretching from the Malay peninsula through Borneo, dipping into Java, Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and Mindanao, Luzon, the Visayas and other Philippine islands, where in contrast to many societies of ‘Eastern Indonesia’ the social and symbolic forms tend to emphasize centers rather than dualities (ERRINGTON 1989: 207).

The ‘Centrist Archipelago’ includes societies with a vast range of social organizations which ERRINGTON differentiates according to their respective degree of hierarchy. These societies range from the hierarchical so-called ‘Indic States’, many of them Islamified for several centuries and living off wet-rice agriculture and/or international trade, to non-hierarchical societies, which she describes as ‘level’ or ‘flat’. The latter include bands of hunters and gatherers as well as shifting dry-rice agriculturalists (ERRINGTON 1987: 407). The hierarchical ‘Centrist’ polities ideologically opposed dualism at their center. They presented themselves as mountains, umbrellas, banyan trees or as *mandalas*. The unmistakable emphasis of all these images is a stable, concentric, undivisible and encompassing unity (ERRINGTON 1989: 73).

Just as in ‘Eastern Indonesia’, ERRINGTON conceives of these different societies as constituting a continuum, variations of common themes, which she identifies to be the accentuation of a symbolic center, centripetal oriented marriage patterns, and similar ‘cognatic’ kinship systems with a kindred mode of social organization.

In ‘Centrist Archipelago’ relationship terminologies, Ego and his or her siblings and cousins tend to be classed together. In this perception ‘cousins’ are perceived as a more distant kind of ‘sibling’. The scheme of classifying same-generational kin according to terms differentiating them up to the *n*th degree divides the people whom one calls by relationship terms into

successive generational layers of ‘siblings’. The layer just above Ego’s consists of parents and their ‘siblings’ from zero to the *n*th degree, and the layer below consists of Ego’s children and their ‘siblings’ up to the *n*th degree (ibid.: 209).

In ‘Centrist’ societies all four types of cousins, two cross and two parallel, count as ‘siblings’ (ibid.: 210), who are classed together with Ego and his true siblings (ibid.: 207) to form one generational layer of ‘siblings’. The relationship terminologies of ‘Centrist’ societies, lacking the explicit differentiation between cognates and affines thereby emphasizing unity, are classified as being ‘cognatic’ (ibid.: 214).<sup>122</sup>

In the anthropological literature on kinship, ‘cognatic’ terminology is often seen as being compatible with a ‘kindred’ mode of social organization. In anthropological jargon a kindred is seen as a grouping or an idea of a group consisting of relatives that varies with the point of view of the person that stands as Ego, which makes kindreds, Ego-centred<sup>123</sup> social units (ibid.).

Lineality is in almost no way acknowledged in many societies of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’, where the people consider themselves to be as fully related to their parents’ and grandparents’ full siblings (zero-degree siblings), as to their parents and bilateral grandparents. Forebears tend to be imagined as occurring in layers rather than in lines, hence ‘cognatic’ kinship systems have the effect of greatly multiplying the number of a person’s forebears in comparison to purely lineal systems (ibid.: 252).

‘Centrist’ societies seem to have no structured set of terms for non-relatives, and these societies, therefore, divide the world into two great camps: relatives/allies and non-relatives/untrustworthy others, with only a few shades between (ibid.: 245).

In the Centrist Archipelago, these layers of “siblings” are the equivalent of known, ordered society itself. Outside the layers of “siblings” (that is, outside the realm of “kin”) lies a blank; socially, this blank tends to be occupied by people who are hostile or distant – strangers, non-kin [...]  
(ERRINGTON 1989: 209).

The opposition between ‘Us’/kin and ‘Them’/non-kin represents both, conceptual categories, as well as social alliances. Relations between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ are very commonly imagined as spatial in the ‘Centrist Archipelago’. Conceptually, relatives and neighbors inhabit safe

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<sup>122</sup> In addition, ERRINGTON states that the societies of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ employ ‘Hawaiian’ terminologies, in ‘Murdockian terms’ (ERRINGTON 1989: 207-209). With reference to PFEFFER (1992: 50), who states that it is completely incomprehensible that these typologies with ethnic titles are still used, I will abstain from employing them.

<sup>123</sup> With reference to FREEMAN (1960) and his discussions of Iban social organization, ERRINGTON points out that it might be more appropriate to think of the Iban and other societies of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ as having sibling-centred kindreds, at least until each sibling marries (ERRINGTON 1989: 215).

space, which is 'close'; alien or hostile space, inhabited by non-relatives, is conceived of as more 'distant'. Nevertheless, safe and 'close' space can be converted into alien territory when it is invaded by non-relatives (ibid.: 251). In the most hierarchical societies of the 'Centrist Archipelago', where the antagonism of social categories like 'Us' and 'Them' is strongest, social life acquires a rather dualistic cast (ibid.: 250-251).

In some 'Centrist' societies the core of 'Us' is predicated on relations that can be created without shared body substance or parturition and nevertheless constitute kin in the indigenous conception. In these conceptions, relationships, even when perceived as based on shared body substance, must continually be validated socially. Relationships of all kinds are presumed to evolve primarily from frequent interaction with one another (ibid.: 252).<sup>124</sup>

In the 'Indic States', potency was conceived to lie at the center; peripheral matters are, therefore, oriented around a common central point. The ruler's and regalia's location became by definition the polity's center from where potency moved 'downward' and 'out' (ibid.: 284), which added a rather dualistic conception that opposes center and periphery to the paradigmatic idea of encompassing centrality.<sup>125</sup>

The conception of potency accumulated at the center is mirrored in 'Centrist's' societies ideas about the elaborated differentiation of house space. The most important aspect of 'Centrist's' houses is their 'navel', identified by ERRINGTON as the center post *pinposik*, around which the rest of the structure is built. This post connects the house's different levels, of which the highest level is the most important since it is associated with the spirits of the Upper World (ibid.: 72). In addition this is the point where the house spirit *Ampo Banua*, the house's *sumange*/vital essence, is attached to the house (ibid.: 75).

Another context in which ERRINGTON highlights a rather dualistic conception in hierarchical 'Centrist' societies is the discussion of the highly elaborated distinction between right and left in these societies. With reference to Robert HERTZ' classic study on religious polarity (1973 [1909]), ERRINGTON states that the right is clearly dominant, equated symbolically with high and front and used to touch and deal with the upper half of the body, while the left is used to deal with the lower half. According to ERRINGTON, the radical hierarchization of body parts

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<sup>124</sup> Monika JANOWSKI (1995: 86) for the Kelabit of Sarawak, as well as Janet CARSTEN (1995a: 123) for the Malays of Pulau Langkawi, state that the respective societies belong to the 'Centrist Archipelago' as described by ERRINGTON. Both scholars identify the commensal meal of rice, cooked at the *house's* hearth, to be the paradigmatic social action constituting relatedness (JANOWSKI 1995: 87; CARSTEN 1995b: 228).

<sup>125</sup> I see 'encompassing centrality' to be a concept in which a spatially located center symbolically encompasses a spatially located periphery. This means that the closer to the center, the more encompassing it becomes.

reflects and helps to constitute social order; it is one way to make the body into a social instrument in a hierarchical society (ERRINGTON 1989: 79).

If right and left hands, head and feet, and so forth are marked as distinctive from each other and differentially valued, they can be made to speak to a social order by reflecting, and in turn enforcing, its main coordinates (ERRINGTON 1989: 80).<sup>126</sup>

The importance of hierarchy, especially in the formally ‘Indic States’, and the simultaneous ideological rejection of complementary dualism causes the formation of a dualism that is irreconcilable. Socially this is exemplified in the contest between closely-matched peers, one of whom must vanquish the other in order to re-establish himself as a hegemonic center (ibid.: 74). ERRINGTON terms this form of ‘dualism’, dualistic centrism.

Those ‘Centrist Archipelago’ societies that allow ‘siblings’ to marry are said to have a centripetal impulse, whereas ERRINGTON distinguishes between the complex centripetal impulse in hierarchical ‘Indic’ States like Luwu and the simpler versions as practiced in ‘hill tribe’ societies, such as the Iban (ibid.: 244).

The pattern of relationships constituted by sibling marriage in each of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ societies is described by ERRINGTON, with reference to an Iban metaphor, as forming ‘nets’. The ultimate point of reference for Iban relationship ‘nets’ is constituted by a sibling set in a *bilek*, whereas Luwu relationship ‘nets’ refer ultimately to the *Datu*.<sup>127</sup> Thus the latter are effectively ancestor-centered (ibid.: 245), since the *Datu* can ideally trace his relations up to the ancestral source, on grounds of his extensive genealogical knowledge.

These social nets are comparable in these two societies because, although the Iban and ToLuwu<sup>128</sup> are at different ends of a scale measuring wealth and social complexity, they are just a transformation away from each other in their ideas about relationships and marriage practices (ERRINGTON 1989: 245).

An organizational feature that both societies share is that they prohibit marriage between zero-degree siblings but allow and even encourage marriage between first-degree ‘siblings’. The

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<sup>126</sup> What ERRINGTON fails to do and what, according to DUMONT, is essential for the differentiation of right and left, is to relate the distinguished parts to the body as a whole, which transcends the distinction and represents the encompassing value. Only the reference to the whole makes the valuation of the each part possible (DUMONT 1979: 810; 1986: 248, 252-253). In the ‘Centrist’s’ conception, this whole is the body’s center, which is conceived to be its navel (ERRINGTON 1989: 43), since it is here that the person’s life energy’ or *sumange* is attached to the body. “The body, in Luwu, I came to discover, is constituted in the same way as other sorts of places, places to which we give names like “house,” “kinship grouping,” and “kingdom”. These different sizes of places share a common organization: each has a “navel,” a source of power or point of origin, around which peripheral matters are oriented.” (ERRINGTON 1983: 547)

<sup>127</sup> *Datu*, is the term used throughout the Austronesian-speaking world to refer to a ruler or leader (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 307).

<sup>128</sup> *Tau*, meaning person and when it is combined with a modifier, the word is pronounced ‘toh’, as in ToLuwu (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 309), meaning people of Luwu (ERRINGTON 1987: 408).

similar marriage preferences result in similar shaped ‘nets’ of relatives, in which social groupings consist of dense knots of closely-related intermarrying people at the center and more dispersed distantly-related or unrelated people constituting the periphery. The difference between the two societies lies in the respective size and scope of these ‘nets’ of relatives (ibid.).

In the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ horizontal layers of siblings are prohibited to marry. Here, it is as though the only layer that exists, when it comes to marriage, is Ego’s own. That being the case, both marriage and marriage prohibitions must operate horizontally, as it were, over the same range of people, namely, ‘siblings’. As a consequence, Ego’s own layer has a double function: it provides Ego’s siblings, but it also provides Ego’s spouse (ibid.: 247). In her discussion of ‘Centrist’ societies, ERRINGTON therefore employs the term endogamy, to refer to marriage within Ego’s own layer of ‘siblings’ and exogamy, for marriage outside this layer (ibid. 254).

Since the people of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ grade ‘siblings’ in terms of distance, their relationship terminology can be diagrammed as forming concentric circles. In the case of the Iban, who according to FREEMAN (1970) imagine their social relations as “the outward spread of concentric ripples made by a stone dropped in a pond (ibid.: 73)”, marriage with *bilek*-siblings is forbidden, but first- and second-degree ‘siblings’ are preferred marriage partners. Continual intermarriage in successive layers of generations involves the possibility of the reunion of full-siblings in the person of their grandchildren in alternating layers. Therefore, ERRINGTON concludes that affinal links strengthen existing consanguine relationships, rather than replace them in ‘Centrist’ societies (ibid. 255-256).

In her description of ‘Centrist Archipelago’ marriages, which mainly rests on the statements of her high-noble informants, ERRINGTON emphasizes the brother-sister pair over the conjugal pair, and therefore consanguinity over affinity. Since these societies stress endogamy as status marker,<sup>129</sup> persons would strive to marry as close as possible. This marriage preference leads ERRINGTON to conclude that in the case of nobles, the brother-sister and husband-wife pairs merely reinforce each other and she abstains from an explicit separation of the two, commonly opposed, cross-sex gender relations.

In her discussion ERRINGTON identifies a correlation between the level of hierarchy and the differing valuations of cross-sex gender relations in the ‘Centrist Archipelago’. The ‘level’ or

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<sup>129</sup> In the context of noble families an additional quality is added to the concept of endogamy. In this case endogamy signifies marriages within Ego’s generational layer and *house*.

‘weak’ ‘Centrist’ societies seem to emphasize the conjugal pair over the brother-sister pair, since here the cross-sex sibling bond must loosen or dissolve with marriage in the House (ibid. 237, 294). Whereas, in the case of hierarchical ‘Centrist’ societies, it is the cross-sex sibling pair that exemplifies unchallenged unity in the realm of marriage (ibid.: 271). ERRINGTON’S emphasis on cross-sex siblingship, and its correlation to the degree of hierarchy found in the respective society, is due to her idea that marriage is an important sign of status and status a sign of ‘power’ (ibid.: 288).<sup>130</sup>

Its most condensed icon is twin-marriage: twin-marriage, in turn, is a condensed and extreme form of ‘sibling’ marriage; and sibling-marriage is the most centripetal and center-producing of possible marriages in a politico-mythical system that postulates and values centers (ERRINGTON 1989: 233).

Affinal ambitions in the hierarchical ‘Indic states’ thus are targeted at a center, people want for themselves and their children to marry ‘in’ and ‘up’, toward the center that is ultimately defined by the ruler. In these societies full-sibling marriage or its compromise act, close-‘sibling’ marriage, in short, are statements about status. According to this cultural logic, ‘incest’ becomes less a sin than a status mistake (ERRINGTON 1989: 215), making close marriage appropriate for nobles but ‘incestuous’ for commoners.

For ERRINGTON, both the mechanics and the cultural-political impulse of centripetal marriage in ‘Indic States’ like Luwu can be usefully understood within the broader context of cross-sex siblingship in the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ and its special meaning in the context of marriage.

In ‘Centrist’ societies ERRINGTON identifies several types of marriage practiced. The marriage type practiced varies according to the status of the respective Ego. If Ego is a commoner his marriage is the simplest. Commoners use teknonymy and their lack of genealogies limits their knowledge of ‘siblings’ beyond the first degree. In classic times, before the formation of the Indonesian Republic, commoners were prohibited from marrying first-degree siblings, a practice that nowadays is legal, but which still causes repulsion by commoners, who feel *ngri*<sup>131</sup> at the thought of marrying a first-degree ‘sibling’, which would feel just like marrying a full sibling. Commoners, therefore, marry ‘exogamously’, outside their own layer of

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<sup>130</sup> ERRINGTON distinguishes her approach, from those perspectives in which politics are regarded according to ‘alleged universals’ like the political actor as calculating maximizer. The latter perspectives that she identifies as being grounded in Western Utilitarianism, stresses the ‘individual’s’ rational quest for wealth, status and power. In contrast she follows Benedict ANDERSON (1972) and Clifford GEERTZ (1980) who are stressing the culture-specific conceptions of ‘power’ found in island Southeast Asian societies. The accumulation of ‘power’, which is seen as cosmic energy or spiritual potency and to which people infer by the presence of signs (cf. ANDERSON 1972: 13-19) becomes important in a conception, where the exercise of power, in the contemporary Western sense, is irrelevant (ibid.: 5-8; GEERTZ 1980: 13; ERRINGTON 1989: 7-10).

<sup>131</sup> *Ngri*, is an Indonesian word meaning something like ‘it is revolting and gives me shivers’ (ERRINGTON 1989: 258).

siblings, just like those ‘Centrist’ societies that prohibit the marriage of any relative (ibid.: 258).

Nobles operate under different constraints. Mid-level nobles, followers rather than leaders of the high core, have their marriages arranged by the latter. The high core wants to ensure that its followers will not marry too close to each other in order to prevent the formation of rivaling centers, consisting of densely interconnected siblings. Such a ‘clump’ of solidary relatives might challenge the power of central high core itself (ibid.).

Marriage preferences within the high core are even more complex, because they involve contradictory marriage practices. To ensure the high core’s status, marriages away from the center – centrifugal – and towards the center – centripetal – are required simultaneously. To expand and to consolidate their followers, high core nobles are required to marry away from the center that the core itself defines. This requires marrying ‘siblings’ of lower rank, usually of the third or fourth degree. This is what ERRINGTON identifies as a centrifugal impulse (ibid.).

This centrifugal impulse is complemented by a centripetal impulse to conserve rank by marrying towards the center. These forms of marriage are primarily concerned with status and ERRINGTON, therefore, prefers to speak of ‘isogamic’ or ‘anisogamic’ marriages instead of endo- or exogamy (ibid.: 259).<sup>132</sup>

Thus, a dual movement is required for marriages of high nobles, whose status is conceptualized in the indigenous idiom of ‘white blood’ (ibid.: 260). The first one, being centrifugal, dilutes ‘white blood’. The second, being centripetal, preserves and perpetuates ‘white blood’. The two contradictory movements are, according to ERRINGTON, both necessary. They are initiated by the unitary high-core center itself when it divides into two aspects, one conserving and one dispersing. Alternatively, these two aspects might be termed ‘sister’ and ‘brother’ (ibid.).

A sister conserves. She conserves siri’ (status-honor) by restrained and dignified behaviour. She conserves wealth by carefully monitoring family finances. She conserves family heirlooms and manuscripts, for she is their guardian. She conserves the degree of white blood she and her brother share (ERRINGTON 1989: 260).

The women’s stewardship of ‘white blood’ is only possible when women are fixed points and their status remains stable. The fixity is attained by requiring monogamy of women and

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<sup>132</sup> For ERRINGTON ‘politics’ in hierarchical ‘Centrist’ societies are also constituted by centripetal as well as centrifugal processes, which are the reason for the fluctuating character of realms in these societies (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 139).

disallowing hypogamy for them. This offers them three options: to marry isogamously, to marry hypergamously, or not to marry at all (ibid.).

A brother, by contrast, disperses in the act of procreation. He creates children by dispersing semen. The cultural license for male expansion and self-multiplication is polygyny (ibid.: 262). Since men could not marry the ruler (who was usually male), the only way for them to attain the goal of marrying 'up' and by the same token 'toward the center', as it is identified by ERRINGTON, is to send their daughters or sisters to the ruler as his lesser status wives. Thus constituting a hypergamous match. The respective brother-sister pair can thus marry 'toward the center' by means of its female aspect. By receiving those women as his lesser wives, the ruler was at the same time marrying centrifugally (ibid.: 263).<sup>133</sup>

In other words, the relevant center in this sort of society ceases to be the sibling set and becomes the court: it ceases to be Ego and becomes Ancestor (ERRINGTON 1989: 263).

At the top of the high-core, no marriage is as desirable as perfect isogamy, and no partners are as similar as full siblings, only such a marriage would guarantee that the signs of social place would be completely preserved. That is why the marriage of opposite sex twins represents the idealized conception of marriage for the high nobles in hierarchical 'Centrist' societies. Twins exemplify lack of differentiation and form an icon of unity in several respects: in regard to white blood, titles and the like, and they even transcend the hierarchical difference of seniority (ibid.: 264). But since sibling marriage is forbidden and isogamous partners are rare, South Sulawesi is strewn with very high noble ladies who remain unmarried (ibid.: 261).

The ideal sister for a high-status man is a chaste, unmarried one, who remains a symbol of their joint social place without compromising it with a husband (ERRINGTON 1989: 288).

#### **II.2.1.4. Centrism, Dualism, and Gender in Insular Southeast Asia**

In his seminal article on dual organizations, LÉVI-STRAUSS distinguishes the 'simple dualism' of moiety systems from the 'concentric dualism' found in Eastern Indonesia. Even though LÉVI-STRAUSS did not address societies of the 'Centrist Archipelago', ERRINGTON adopts his typology and states that the latter societies exhibit 'dualistic centrism' (ibid.: 266).

Dualistic and centrist principles rest on each other in both 'Eastern Indonesia' and the 'Centrist Archipelago'. Therefore ERRINGTON considers these 'types' as representing transformations of one another, where the valences of the principles differ in each conceptual space.

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<sup>133</sup> This understanding of marriage strategies in high-noble houses, actually, resembles LÉVI-STRAUSS' description of Kwakiutl marriage strategies (cf. above).



According to ERRINGTON, the ‘concentric dualism’ of ‘Eastern Indonesia’ is well known for its dualism at every level: symbolically, for the distinction between right and left, male and female, heaven and earth, black and white in a variety of media from dwellings to funeral ceremonies; socially, for the distinction between wife-takers and wife-givers; politically, for its diarchies, which split inner, ritual, and dignified authority from outer, instrumental, and active authority; linguistically and ritually, for its use of parallelism in ritual language (ibid.). At the same time, these societies postulate (by means of ritual space, the structure of marriage exchange, and myth) a unitary mythical and ancestral center – an ideal state that can no longer be achieved. These societies are riddled with hierarchy, and this hierarchy is established with reference to the idealized unity of the mythical center.<sup>134</sup> Hierarchical difference is encoded as difference in seniority, generational or birth-order precedence. Thus the wife-giver/wife-taker pair encodes the senior/junior generational distinction of mother’s brother/sister’s son, and ‘older brother’ Houses ritually encompass their ‘younger brother’ Houses (ibid.).

The postulated center, to which differences in hierarchy and the succession of layers of siblings through duration ultimately refer, is an ancestral origin point no longer present socially in this world (ERRINGTON 1989: 267).

Although the ‘flow of women’ in ‘Eastern Indonesia’ requires women to move and brothers to stand still, ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ can be reunited two generational layers below themselves in person of their cross-sex grandchildren in the event that their own children marry each other and produce children. The marriage of the children of a brother and sister pair thus temporarily creates unity while maintaining the formal structure of duality, which forces their children to separate again (ibid.: 268).<sup>135</sup>

For ERRINGTON, the ‘Eastern Indonesian’ system of multiple Houses engaged in the exchange of women and valuables is predicated on the fact that there are two sexes: without these two sexes; there would be no rationale for separation, and therefore none for the exchange of valuables. The enforced asexuality of ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ within a House is what, according

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<sup>134</sup> “The Mambai of East Timor conceive of their society in narrative terms as a transformation of an earlier state of unity and wholeness. Ritual exchange obligations project the narrativized past onto the present in the form of a primordial whole that both opposes and includes its parts. The past lives on in the present as a hierarchical relationship between the protagonists in exchange relationships.” (TRAUBE: 1989: 321)

<sup>135</sup> To show that cross-sex siblings exemplify unchallenged unity in the realm of marriage, ERRINGTON compares the Iban (‘Centrist’) and the Mambai of East Timor (‘Eastern Indonesia’), whose marriage practices are said to resemble one another. Both societies strive to reunite cross-sex siblings in the second following generational layer, in the person of their cross-sex grandchildren. The only difference, according to ERRINGTON, is that the structure of the former society seeks to unite, whereas the latter’s seeks to maintain duality (ERRINGTON 1989: 271).

to ERRINGTON might be considered as the specific ‘incest taboo’ of ‘Eastern Indonesian’ societies (ibid.).

By reifying the exchange of women with the exchange of valuable objects, the societies of ‘Eastern Indonesia’ guarantee the separation of cross-sex ‘siblings’ born in one House. Although unity represents an ideal state, it is nevertheless impossible to achieve, since the reification of social relations through the exchange of different categories of valuables in each direction makes a reversal of the ‘flow of women’ impossible, “[I]n Eastern Indonesia, then, unity is postulated but fracture is institutionalized (ibid. 269).”

Predicated on their cultural logic, the hierarchical ‘Centrist’ states imagine themselves using concentric images with central high points suggesting encompassment and perfect internal unity, where the central city and especially the ruler’s palace are commonly said to represent a microcosm of the cosmos. These hegemonic centers represent unity and form the basis of ‘Centrist’ societies’ self-representation. According to this cultural logic the ‘political’ center, located and locatable by the presence of the ruler, the royal residence, and the state’s regalia, was the state’s highest and most central space, that at once is most vulnerable to attack and the most powerful in its intrinsic potency (ibid.: 94-95).

The social and cosmological route taken by the Centrist Archipelago, by contrast, institutionalized unity but is haunted by duality. Each centrist society there institutionalized its center or centers and strove to make its illusion a reality through its socio-politics of ceremonies and marriage (ERRINGTON 1989: 269).

As this citation indicates, ‘Centrist’ societies are simultaneously permeated by dualism, especially in form of the ubiquitous distinction between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. Wherever there is a center, there is a challenging outside, a peer-center beyond the borders of each center’s influence, which is regarded as hostile ‘Other’. This opposition between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ exemplifies, what ERRINGTON calls ‘dualistic centrism’.

For ERRINGTON, the ‘political’ processes and the cosmo-political problems of ‘Eastern Indonesia’ and the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ are therefore the same at one level, different at another. Cosmologically both begin with undivided centers, unitary Houses. The major difference is that the House of ‘Eastern Indonesia’ has fractured into multiple *houses*, and guarantees that they can never be united into a single House again, because Houses, which are cause, effect, and agents of exchange, would disappear if they could marry themselves stopping the continuation of the ‘flow of life’ (ibid.: 272).

Unity would be reached too quickly, without the detour through exchange, which is equivalent to life in Eastern Indonesia. Thus “brother” and “sister” must part if the multiple-House’d world is to happen (ERRINGTON 1989: 272).

The former ‘Indic States’ of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ begin with a postulated single House an ideal that they try to achieve in the present. They permit endogamy and their political problem becomes therefore the danger of the center collapsing in on itself. They had to elaborate dualism in order to establish the center as the focus of spiritual potency. This centered conception implies that there is a periphery, surrounding the center and being qualitatively different from it (ERRINGTON 1989: 285).

In centrist societies of the Centrist Archipelago, the “incest tabu” was necessary to avoid further collapse, further unification. These societies were, in the logic set forth here, precariously closer to the death of stasis than are those of Eastern Indonesia (ERRINGTON 1989: 272).

ERRINGTON also uses this conception of potency to explain her understanding of gender relations in the ‘Centrist Archipelago’. She applies the conception of the center’s concentrated potency to her analysis of the relationship between the conjugal pair. In her understanding the husband becomes more potent than his wife because he represents the center of their relation, the encompassing, the unmoving, the more dignified aspect. His wife becomes his active agent, his spokesperson, his periphery; she attends to practical needs, cooks, looks after children and takes care of money. The wife’s activity and her control over money reveals her inferior potency, since activity and practicality bear an inverse relation to dignity in the indigenous logic (ibid.: 288). Therefore, it is possible to argue that the male encompasses the female in the context of marriage.

ERRINGTON’S argumentation implies that the relation between a sister and a brother reverses the relationship between husband and wife in hierarchical ‘Centrist’ societies. In the cross-sex sibling relation, the sister is the more dignified, status-conserving aspect, emblematic of her brother’s honor. In the ‘Centrist’s’ conception, the ideal sister for a high-status man is chaste and unmarried one, remaining a symbol of their joint social place, representing the House’s unity without compromising it with a husband. Therefore, it might be said that the female aspect encompasses the male in the context of cross-sex siblingship.

To illustrate the differing conceptions of women as wives or as sisters, ERRINGTON refers to her discussion of the house’s symbolism. The Luwu house symbolism resembles that that of the human body (ibid.: 74, 75). The domestic area is occupied by wives during their practical, everyday work and corresponds to the anal-genital area of the human body. The kitchen,

located in the back of the house, is often lower than the rest of it, and from here peoples descend the back steps, in order to take out the garbage or go to the fields to defecate (ibid.: 288).

At the same time, the unmarried girls/sisters of high-noble families, especially when guests come to ceremonies, used to stay in the most elevated part of the house, the area where the family's heirlooms and precious rice were stored and where the house's guardian spirit is supposed to dwell. This fact connects them with the spirits of the Upper World and marks their high status (ibid.: 72). ERRINGTON concludes, thereupon, that the ambiguity encountered in female roles, present a problem for their associated men. Women, paradigmatically sisters in Luwu, are not inferior to men, but they are weaker. At the same time they represent dignified precious emblems of honor. This combination makes women a tremendous hazard to their associated men in high-noble families (ibid.: 289).<sup>136</sup>

The relationship of the brother-sister and husband-wife pairs in the more level societies of the 'Centrist Archipelago', as well as in the case of commoners constituting the periphery in the 'Indic States', is, according to ERRINGTON, far less problematic. In these lower status cases, when little potency can be accumulated or conveyed across generations, female siblings are soon replaced by wives. In the case of the 'hill tribes' (and commoners), the husband-wife pair, therefore, rather represents the icon of the male-female bond than the brother-sister pair (ibid. 294). The common theme uniting level as well as stratified 'Centrist' societies is thus the evaluation of the cross-sex gender relation in the context of siblingship and marriage and how these relations are used to communicate core social values.

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<sup>136</sup> ERRINGTON'S description of Luwu noble conception of womanhood contrasts with Sherry ORTNER'S description of the paradigmatic conceptions of womanhood for Polynesian and Southeast Asian cognatic endogamous societies (like the Luwu), and in contrast, resembles the latter's description of gender ideologies in patrilineal systems. "The Indian woman, for example, is culturally described as a "naturally" weak and dependent creature, requiring lifetime protection [...]." (ORTNER 1981: 399)

### III. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

As Propp pointed out several decades ago, transformational analysis is a useful tool to reduce the multiplicity of empirical data to explanatory simplicity (MARANDA 1972: 342).

In addition to LÉVI-STRAUSS' structuralist concepts of transformation and *house* society, ERRINGTON'S central theme, the paradigmatic meaning of the 'center' or 'navel' for Luwu social organization, and more so for the whole of island Southeast Asia derives, as she acknowledges, from Clifford GEERTZ'S (1980) well-known discussion of the nineteenth-century 'theatre state' in Bali as well as from Benedict ANDERSON'S investigation of the Javanese conception of 'power' (1972). Core paradigms of GEERTZ'S and ANDERSON'S studies, obviously, reappear in ERRINGTON'S analysis and will be shortly introduced below.

In contrast to modern ideology, GEERTZ states that political authority in Bali existed to serve religion and ritual and not the other way around. He describes this non-western ideology as the 'doctrine of the exemplary center' (GEERTZ 1980: 11). Accordingly, the Balinese imagined their social organization as being modelled upon the internal organization of a single capital, the ruler's residence and, therefore, the realm's center. This organization expressed the realm's general structure in ceremonial, structural, and administrative terms simultaneously (ibid.: 15).

This is the theory that the court-and-capital is at once a microcosm of the supernatural order – “an image of ... the universe on a smaller scale” – and the material embodiment of political order. [...] The ritual life of the court, and in fact the life of the court generally, is thus paradigmatic, not merely reflective, of social order. What it is reflective of, the priests declare, is supernatural order, “the timeless Indian world of the gods” upon which men should, in strict proportion to their status, seek to pattern their lives (GEERTZ 1980: 13).

GEERTZ sees nineteenth-century Balinese politics as dominated by two opposing principles, the centripetal one of exemplary state ritual, and the centrifugal one of state structure (ibid.: 18; cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 26). In Bali, political power inhered less in property than in people, it was an accumulation of prestige, not of territory that rulers strived for (GEERTZ 1980: 24).

ANDERSON, on his part, contrasts the classical Javanese idea of 'power' (*kasektèn*),<sup>137</sup> with the corresponding Western conceptions and describes the former as a formless, constantly

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<sup>137</sup> In this context ANDERSON refers to the inappropriateness of Western terms when it comes to the description of contrasting cultural frameworks. He acknowledges the cultural bias when he continues to use the word 'power', but since there is no superordinate language and conceptual framework in which to place both Western and non-Western conceptions, all that one can do is to be aware of this bias. “When I say that the Javanese have

creative energy which rulers seek to accumulate instead of exercising<sup>138</sup> it (ANDERSON 1972: 4-8). The Javanese utilized elements from Indic cosmology for formal classificatory purposes and their conception of a polity, the *mandala*, derives from Indian political theory (ibid.: 30), which makes the classic Javanese polities 'Indic States'.

The designations for the classical Southeast Asian empires and kingdoms are derived from the names of their capital cities, constituting their centers. In the classical Javanese language there is no clear etymological distinction between the idea of a capital city and that of a kingdom. In the word *negari* both are subsumed. Thus the 'state' is typically defined not by its perimeter, but by its center. The territorial extension of the 'state' is always in flux; it varies according to the amount of 'power' concentrated in its center (ibid.: 28-29). The best symbolic form to imagine the Javanese conception of a polity is, according to ANDERSON, "a cone of light cast downwards by a reflector lamp", where the ruler, who personifies the unity of society, constitutes the center that accumulates 'power' (ibid.: 22).

ERRINGTON adopts and conflates the ideas of ANDERSON and GEERTZ in her detailed interpretation of Luwu society. According to the premises of the latter's studies she identifies Luwu as a former 'Indic State', just like Java and Bali. Furthermore, the idea of the ritual center represents the foundation of her comparative approach to island Southeast Asian societies in general, whereby she utilizes LÉVI-STRAUSS' 'structuralist' concepts to show that the indigenous categories of Houses represent transformations of a shared idea. Her perspective can, therefore, be identified as structural-symbolic. Based on this perspective her model can be seen as an attempt to analyze culturally constructed concepts and categories and trace their elaboration in various socio-cultural contexts, looking for common themes that renders their cross-cultural comparison analytically legitimate.

As much as ERRINGTON'S conception of 'Centrist' societies derives admittedly from ANDERSON'S and GEERTZ'S ideas, her perception of 'Eastern Indonesian' societies seems to be deeply influenced by Clark CUNNINGHAM'S (1973 [1964]) analysis of the spatial order in the Atoni house. It is not explicitly acknowledged by ERRINGTON, but I believe that her conception of the paradigmatic 'Eastern Indonesian' House shows striking similarities with CUNNINGHAM'S structural analysis. Instead of highlighting the relevance of CUNNINGHAM'S seminal study, ERRINGTON reduces his theoretical insights to the mere identification of an analogy between right/left and male/female symbolism in the Atoni house (ERRINGTON 1989:

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a radically different idea of power from that which obtains in the contemporary West, properly speaking this statement is meaningless, since Javanese have no equivalent word or concept." (Anderson 1972: 4)

<sup>138</sup> "His power is revealed rather than demonstrated." (Anderson 1972: 65)

73). In contrast to this simplification, a review of CUNNINGHAM'S article reveals that he emphasizes the house's center and its symbolic/ritual superiority as representing the valued idea of unity. The Atoni- house's center is associated with women and ancestors and CUNNINGHAM'S identifies as the major theme of the house's symbolic order the simultaneous expression of unity and difference and their opposed valuation, whereby difference is ideologically subordinated to unity (cf. CUNNINGHAM 1973: 219 [1964]). As this review of Cunningham's article shows, basic premises of ERRINGTON'S model are already introduced in his structural analysis of the Atoni house.

ERRINGTON'S perspective and her approach to island Southeast Asia have attracted criticism for several reasons. Especially her application of the term 'Indic State' to pre-colonial Luwu and her conceptual 'types' of societies have attracted critical comments from regional specialists (cf. e.g. BABCOCK 1991; CALDWELL 1991; FOX 1991) as well as from anthropologists dealing with the concept of house societies (e.g. HARDENBERG 2007).

In their critical reviews of *Meaning and Power*, the historian Ian CALDWELL (1991), a specialist in island Southeast Asian and especially Sulawesi history, and James FOX (1991), a well-known structural-anthropologist and specialist in the societies of 'Eastern Indonesia', both criticize ERRINGTON for her disregard of Islam when she characterizes Luwu as a former 'Indic State'. According to FOX it was Islam instead of 'Indic' culture that arrived in Sulawesi coming from Java from at least the fourteenth century forth.

Islam has thus had a pervasive influence for over three hundred years, yet the important Islam features of Luwu society are virtually ignored in this study or, instead, are inappropriately characterized as "Indic." (FOX 1991: 989)

CALDWELL'S criticism is even harsher when he concludes that South Sulawesi never was Indianized, in any real sense of the word, and refers in his definition of Indianization to the classic study of George COEDÈS, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (1968).<sup>139</sup> Since no characteristically 'Indian' features are identifiable, CALDWELL concludes that the organization and administration of pre-colonial Luwu must have rested on indigenous, 'Austronesian' categories of social and political thought (CALDWELL 1991: 115). ERRINGTON'S classification of Luwu as an 'Indic State' is wrong according to CALDWELL and he argues that her

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<sup>139</sup> "Coèdes defined Indianization as the expansion of an organized culture founded upon Indian conception of royalty characterized by Hindu or Buddhist cults, the mythology of the Purānas, the observance of Indian law texts and the use of the Sanskrit language. The transmission of the first three features was by means of the last [...]." (CALDWELL 1991: 114)

classification seems to be grounded in her theoretical premises rather than in her ethnographic material.

CALDWELL'S subsequent discussion of ERRINGTON'S book indicates two additional weaknesses in her characterization of Luwu social organization. The first weakness is ERRINGTON'S admitted 'view of culture from the top', that she presents as shared by the majority of those in the middle and on the bottom (ERRINGTON 1989: 22). This is stated without any further detailed investigation of the latter's ideas regarding social organization. ERRINGTON'S monograph must, therefore, be classified as offering an elite ideology and the historical insights of her study stay rather limited, since they add no new insights to the indigenous Southeast Asian historical sources that almost always present an elite view of events. That might have been different had ERRINGTON presented the 'peasant's eye' view of Luwu society that anthropologists, due to their conducted fieldwork, are principally able to deliver (cf. CALDWELL 1991: 112).

CALDWELL'S last objection is ERRINGTON'S adoption of ANDERSON'S *mandala* model of political power in the context of her description of the Luwu realm. CALDWELL argues that the implicit borderlessness of Indianized kingdoms, as described by ANDERSON, is inappropriate when it is applied to the situation in South Sulawesi (ibid.: 115). With reference to CALDWELL'S article one can therefore conclude that ERRINGTON'S central weakness is one of method, since she has allowed her model of an Indianized, *mandala-like* kingdom to select as well as to interpret her data.

A further weakness of ERRINGTON'S argument is exposed when one considers FOX'S (1991) review of her book. From an anthropologist's perspective, ERRINGTON'S most fundamental shortcoming is her characterization of island Southeast Asian societies and their typological classification into two opposed 'types', deduced from it. Especially the category she terms 'Eastern Indonesia' appears dubious.

In ERRINGTON'S characterization both 'types' of society appear to represent homogenous categories. 'Eastern Indonesian' societies are said to be constituted by multiple and affinally related exogamous Houses, whose asymmetric marriage alliances relate them hierarchically. 'Eastern Indonesia' can thus be contrasted with the wishfully autonomous, potentially endogamous sibling layer Houses of the Centrist Archipelago (cf. ERRINGTON 1987: 404-405). This characterization of 'Eastern Indonesian' societies implies that their Houses are generally patrilineal, where women and their female children must leave their natal *houses* in an exogamous strategy of exchange.



In contrast to this implicit premise of ERRINGTON'S characterization, FOX, an expert for 'Eastern Indonesian' societies (cf. FOX 1980), states that the eighty or more societies of that region employ very different strategies to perpetuate their *house*-origin, which, for example, include a variety of endogamous strategies in addition to female-based core groups where men must marry out (FOX 1991: 989). ERRINGTON'S characterization is therefore a gross simplification that represents the "1930s state of anthropological research" (ibid.).

The excellent and increasingly detailed ethnographic literature on eastern Indonesia makes it exceedingly difficult, therefore, to be satisfied with the simplistic distinctions offered as the basis for Errington's major dichotomy (FOX 1991: 989).

Roland HARDENBERG criticizes ERRINGTON in a similar vein, when he identifies her categories of 'Centrist' and 'Eastern Indonesian'<sup>140</sup> societies as being far too imprecise and ambiguous for the anthropological study of island Southeast Asia (HARDENBERG 2007: 163). Following his general rejection of strict typologies in the anthropological study of 'houses' and their meaning, HARDENBERG calls for a 'holistic approach' that aims to study 'houses' according to the symbolical expression of social ideas and values that are constituted within hierarchically related contexts (ibid.: 158). HARDENBERG compares ERRINGTON'S categories and her comparison of Houses with LÉVI-STRAUSS' categorical distinction of 'differentiated' and 'undifferentiated' societies in his attempt to draft the category of *house* societies. As in the case of LÉVI-STRAUSS, whose contradictory employment of categories limits their analytical value, as is exposed by HOWELL'S discussion (cf. HOWELL 1995: 150), ERRINGTON'S comparison suffers, because her categories are too ambiguous (cf. HARDENBERG 2007: 163). I would add that her implicit attempt to reconcile 'interpretative' and 'structuralist' approaches without explicitly explaining her theoretical concepts additionally accounts for the encountered ambiguity.

A more detailed presentation and acknowledgment of theoretical concepts, such as DUMONT'S encompassment and hierarchy which appear to be extremely apt for the interpretation of ERRINGTON'S data, might have strengthened her analysis and prevented such strict denials, like CALDWELL'S dismissal of her entire model (cf. CALDWELL 1991: 117).

In the following I would like to concur with these criticisms and add some further remarks that allude to my examination of ERRINGTON'S model. I believe that ERRINGTON can be blamed for carrying PROPP'S statement about the usefulness of transformational analysis too

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<sup>140</sup> In fact, HARDENBERG differentiates between 'Centrist' and 'Dualistic' societies. I will continue to use the term 'Eastern Indonesian' societies that denotes the same configuration as HARDENBERG'S 'Dualistic' societies.

far (cf. above). ERRINGTON has not only managed to reduce the (immense) multiplicity of empirical data to explanatory simplicity by using the concept of transformation, but to also empty the concept of its analytic usefulness, which appears to be its innate capacity to relate elements under the premise of evolvment.

ERRINGTON'S inflationary employment of the concept, results in her classifying each society of island Southeast Asia as being a transformation of every other. Though a statement that may be valid from her standpoint, it simultaneously seems to lack any analytic significance, especially since it allows the random comparison of any two arbitrarily selected societies from within the region, on grounds of the assumption that there must be some shared features.<sup>141</sup>

The way ERRINGTON refers to the concept and her assumption of a general comparability seems to be too simplistic. Especially when referring to a region like island Southeast Asia, for which a diversity of local cultures is commonly acknowledged (cf. e.g. PARNWELL 1999: 23; HÖLLMANN 1999: 34), any attempt to construct an all-encompassing typological category is deemed to appear arbitrary and reductionist. A further problem is that the logical extension of ERRINGTON'S model would allow for an interpretation that perceives nearly all existing societies as being transformations of one another.

In an attempt to support the validity of her model, ERRINGTON tries to prove that the societies of the Luwu and Iban represent comparable matters in the sense of a structural transformation (cf. ERRINGTON 1987: 409-423, 1989: 244-256). In this attempt we encounter one of her gravest methodological shortcomings that limits the persuasiveness of her entire argument. This is, as already indicated by CALDWELL, ERRINGTON'S neglect to present a detailed account and analysis of Luwu commoner society. Her entire comparative approach suffers from her exclusive focus and reliance on her noble informants.

According to her analytical focus on sibblingship, marriages, and *houses*, ERRINGTON should have tested the degree to which commoners really share the nobles' ideology and symbolism she presents as paradigmatic for the entire society irrespective of social status. A comparison of noble's and commoner's conceptions might have proven her general argument's validity. The omission of the commoner's perception appears especially grave since ERRINGTON indicates contrasting marriage patterns and ideas structuring relations in the cases of Luwu commoners and nobles, without elaborating it further (cf. e.g. ERRINGTON 1989: 258).

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<sup>141</sup> In fact, ERRINGTON'S classification seems to resemble NEEDHAM'S concept of polythetic classification. NEEDHAM argues, with reference to WITTGENSTEIN, that it is unnecessary for members of a single class to share a common feature (cf. NEEDHAM 1979: 65-66). The constitution of classes is based, rather, on 'family resemblances', which constitute classes like ropes consisting of overlapping fibres (NEEDHAM 1975: 350).

Simultaneously, she states that her comparison of Iban and Luwu societies rests on conceptions of marriage patterns that “are just a transformation away from each other” (ERRINGTON 1989: 245).

In contrast to her statements, the few comments about Luwu commoner’s conceptions rather seem to support HEADLEY’S and WATERSON’S theses (cf. above), whereby contrasting ideas regarding the constitution of social units, may exist in parallel in a single socio-political system, marking hierarchically related strata of society and, as I would add, hierarchically related levels of ideology.<sup>142</sup> Therefore ERRINGTON seems to contradict herself when she presents Luwu relational ideology as a homogenous entity that can be compared with other such entities.

In my opinion, the comparison of Luwu nobles and commoners, especially their conceptions of Houses, might have improved ERRINGTON’S overall comparison by providing an intermediary state according to the ‘structuralist’ conception of transformation, making the analytical transition from former ‘Indic State’ to ‘hill tribe’ society easier to trace. Another possibility would have been that this comparison might have even questioned ERRINGTON’S general conception of a ‘Centrist Archipelago’ ‘type’ of society, by showing that contrasting conceptions exist within a single socio-political system without sharing the paradigmatically ‘Centrist’ characteristics. At least, it would have made strengthened her general statements about Luwu society and it might have prevented some of her contradictory statements about the relationship between siblingship and marriage in ‘Centrist’ societies.

These contradictory statements about siblingship and marriage are revealed by a close exploration of ERRINGTON’S argument and weaken the persuasiveness of her entire model additionally. These contradictions accumulate in her attempt to characterize ‘Centrist’ societies and they are especially frequent when ERRINGTON discusses the relationship between siblingship and marriage and when she tries to prove the importance of dualism.

According to ERRINGTON’S argument the common theme uniting all ‘Centrist’ societies, as well as relating them with those of ‘Eastern Indonesia’, is condensed in the idiom of cross-sex siblingship and its relevance for the conception of the House as a ritual center. After ERRINGTON has identified the cross-sex sibling pair as the paradigmatic relation for her conception of island Southeast Asian Houses as centered worship communities, she, nevertheless, ends her comparative conclusion with the statement: “... [i]n hill tribes, the

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<sup>142</sup> ERRINGTON indicates a similar conclusion, while she is discussing naming policies and genealogy keeping, without exploring it further (cf. ERRINGTON 1989: 205).

husband-wife pair, it is my impression, is more nearly the icon of the male-female bond than is the brother-sister pair” (ERRINGTON 1989: 294), and that despite her initial proposition that “in Malayo-Polynesia the paradigm and icon of the male-female pair is the brother-sister pair” (ibid.: 214).

A comparable contradiction occurs in ERRINGTON’S discussion of the relevance of marriage for an analytic classification of ‘Centrist’ societies. ERRINGTON distinguishes ‘Centrist’ societies from ‘Eastern Indonesian’ societies on the grounds of the former’s paradigmatic endogamous marriage systems, which she contrasts with the paradigmatic exogamous marriage systems of the latter. Nevertheless, after she defines the meaning of endogamy in the ‘Centrist’ context, she states that Luwu commoners would marry exogamously (cf. ibid.: 258).

Likewise she contradicts herself in the attempt to point out the dualism of ‘Centrist’ and the centrism of ‘Eastern Indonesian’ societies. Thereby ERRINGTON states that the ‘level hill tribe’ societies of the ‘Centrist Archipelago’ seem to lack the pervasively dualistic cast of the hierarchical ‘Indic State’ (cf. ibid.: 250). ERRINGTON, apparently, seems not to recognize that this statement is a contradiction of her general argument whereby ‘Centrist’ societies’ are totally pervaded with dualism. These contradictions between her general statements about the characteristics of ‘Centrist’ and ‘Eastern Indonesian’ societies and her discussion of case studies question her entire attempt to conceptualize a ‘Centrist’ ‘type’ of society; and also the founding thesis of her model, that both ‘types’ are transformations of each other, which is partly based on the assumption that both share centrism as well as dualism as organizing features.

There are some additional contradictions that occur in her attempt of pointing out the dualism of ‘Centrist’ societies. Another example is her attempt to analyze the dualism of ‘Centrist’ societies on the basis of the right/left opposition. While investigating the symbolism of house space, she concludes with the statement that “a strict division between right and left in the house would be alien to the sensibilities of Luwu” (ibid.: 74). Only five pages later she identifies that “[I]n Luwu and other centrist hierarchical former states of Southeast Asia, right and left are highly distinguished and right is clearly dominant, equated symbolically with high and front” (ibid.: 79).

Even if one considers the different contexts she refers to, the house in the former and the body in the latter, her statements remain contradictory since she equates high and front; categories, whose symbolic significance is highly elaborated in the former context (ibid.: 68-69, 72-73),

symbolically with right in the latter. More than that, the logic of her general argument presupposes that the body and the house are conceived of as the same kind of entity, implying a homologous classification of their parts.

As these examples indicate, most contradictions occur in the context of her attempt to conceptualize the 'Centrist Archipelago' as a 'type', a new analytic category. This fact seems to support a general critique of her model. Because of these contradictions and other inconsistencies encountered in her argument I believe her model to be of limited analytical value. Especially the heuristic usefulness of a new analytic category termed 'Centrist Archipelago' remains questionable.

Her comparative model, certainly, represents the most difficult and challenging aspect of ERRINGTON'S anthropological study of Southeast Asian societies (cf. FOX 1991: 988). It includes promising ideas and suggestions that are capable of transcending some limitations of traditional anthropological categories and former anthropological models that were intended to explain the social organization of Southeast Asian societies. Especially her emphasis of the inseparability of marriage and cross-sex siblingship and the implicit conclusion that an apt analysis of island Southeast Asian forms of social organization has to consider their relation, as well as their relation to society as a whole, is remarkable and to me represents the most valuable aspect of her entire study. This important insight is further enriched by ERRINGTON'S finding that the House must be seen as a ritual center emphasizing consanguineal unity that transcends affinity. Thereby ERRINGTON'S model questions classic anthropological approaches that have identified marriage as the principle relation characterizing island Southeast Asian social formations. ERRINGTON'S comparative model of the House in island Southeast Asia manages to overcome certain limitations of traditional analytic categories, but her conceptual 'types' of island Southeast Asian society nevertheless rely in their constitution largely on these 'threadbare' categories, she wishes to overcome.

Furthermore, I believe that the possible insights of ERRINGTON'S study are restricted by some grave methodological shortcomings. These shortcomings are most obvious in her attempt to define the 'Centrist Archipelago' as an analytic category or 'type' of society, where I have shown that grave logical contradictions question the consistency of her entire argument.

It seems possible to me to solve some of these contradictions by adopting DUMONT'S structuralist perspective and applying to ERRINGTON'S case studies. This perspective seems to be apt because the majority of encountered contradictions seem to arise out of her recourse to

the concept of complementarity which she uses to characterize the paradigmatic quality of cross-sex gender relations in island Southeast Asia (cf. ERRINGTON 1990: 47).

Her entire approach rests on a logic that strictly divides between relations that are coded by hierarchy and others that are coded by complementarity. This idea seems to be inappropriate in the context of her case studies and the cause of most contradictions in her argument, since hierarchy appears to be the essential relation to code difference in all social contexts. ERRINGTON emphasizes complementarity in the context of cross-sex gender relations at the expense of hierarchy, thereby reducing hierarchy to qualify relations in the various context in which difference is coded according to relative age. ERRINGTON'S conception of complementarity rests on an assumed equality between the sexes that expresses a principal valuation of unity (ERRINGTON 1989: 265).

Nevertheless, her own examples indicate that hierarchy is used to code the relationship between husband and wife in some important contexts. Therefore, it would be more appropriate for ERRINGTON to identify hierarchy as the underlying principle that codes difference and complementarity as an exceptional case in a principally hierarchical system.

An implicit source of her conception of complementarity might be CUNNINGHAM'S (1973 [1964]) well-known study, in which he employs the concept of complementarity to describe the cross-sex gender relationship for the Atoni. Even though CUNNINGHAM emphasizes that opposition does not mean separation (*ibid.*: 224), for him, in contrast to ERRINGTON, the concept of complementarity structures "relationships in which the premise of inequality is pervasive" (*ibid.*: 232). More than that, CUNNINGHAM'S conception of complementarity, perceived as a relationship between opposed categories that becomes reversed depending on the context (prominently in ritual) (*ibid.*: 230), and his general idea of an undivided center being superior to its parts (*ibid.*: 219), resemble DUMONT'S logic structuring his idea of hierarchical oppositions. These resemblances indicate that CUNNINGHAM'S conception of complementarity rests on the principle of hierarchy and not of equality. As already mentioned, ERRINGTON'S failure therefore becomes, her omission to define the theoretical concepts she employs.

In addition, I argue that some other contradictions emerge, because she does not seem to differentiate the contexts or ideological levels of the societies under investigation. According to DUMONT'S perspective, what appears as a contradiction to the Western observer might be understood as a reversal of an asymmetric/hierarchical relationship of idea-values (like cross-sex siblingship-exemplifying consanguinity and the conjugal pair-exemplifying affinity),

marking the change of ideological levels and, therefore, becoming meaningful for the whole ideology (cf. DUMONT 1979: 811). When, in contrast, regarded as belonging to just one social context and a single ideological level, the reversed relationship of opposed idea-values might appear contradictory or odd to the observer. The latter case seems to occur in ERRINGTON'S attempts to classify the paradigmatic cross-sex gender relation in 'Centrist' and 'Eastern Indonesia' societies respectively. What DUMONT calls a logical scandal (ibid.: 809) occurs when ERRINGTON states that siblingship is more important than affinity at one point of her discussion, only to claim the reverse at the next. Adopting DUMONT'S perspective and his 'method' of hierarchical opposition allows us to dissolve some of these contradictions or logical scandals impeding ERRINGTON'S analysis, since it allows the conception of cross-sex siblingship as a whole to encompass marriage on the supreme level and, simultaneously, being opposed or subordinated to it on levels of lesser value.

I think her reference to James BOON (1986), who has remarked that distinguishing between 'right' and 'left' requires a third element from which to have a point of view (ERRINGTON 1989: 266), indicates a conception of 'Eastern Indonesian' social organization according to the premises of DUMONT'S perspective. The differentiation of 'wife-givers' and 'wife-takers' is said to require an unstated third term, Ego's own House. That is why concentric dualistic social forms are predicated on a third element, an unstated center, standing outside the dualities (ibid.: 266-267).

This explanation, to my mind, resembles DUMONT'S discussion of the relationship between right and left hand, where the body represents the unstated third element that transcends the distinction and is the reason for their different values (cf. DUMONT 1979: 810). The question becomes, therefore, whether the House representing the mythical center can be seen as the whole that transcends the dualities between, e.g., wife-givers and wife-takers, male and female, older and younger etc.? If this would be the case, as I argue, it would question the commonly held assumption that 'Eastern Indonesian' social organization is predicated on affinity thereby stressing dualism as the major organizing social principle. This might be done by showing that it is the ancestral unity of the house, imagined via the idiom of cross-sex siblingship that represents the whole and most encompassing value located on the supreme ideological level, and that dualism is omnipresent, but found only on ideological levels with inferior value.

I argue, that an interpretation of ERRINGTON'S study according to the premises of DUMONT'S perspective<sup>143</sup> would support ERRINGTON'S insight regarding the conception of island Southeast Asian Houses as ritual centers. In accordance with these premises and therefore freed from certain logical contradictions, I would summarize ERRINGTON'S material as an attempt to show that in the whole of island Southeast Asia, Houses represent centered worship communities. In these societies marriage is the social means by which the ritual center is perpetuated and/or constituted over time. The social emphasis on marriage is, nevertheless, overlaid by a symbolic emphasis of local idioms of cross-sex siblingship that conceive the *house's* center always in terms of the brother-sister pair that links ancestors and descendants by creating a state of primordial unity. Therefore, ritual associated with ancestors emerges as the cardinal value throughout island Southeast Asia, representing the supreme ideological level, where consanguinity encompasses affinity, and centrism conceived as unity encompasses dualism conceived as differentiation. Nevertheless, on subordinate ideological levels, this relation might be reversed so that affinity encompasses consanguinity; the conjugal pair is emphasized at the expense of the cross-sex sibling bond; and differentiation becomes more relevant than unity. The latter aspect is elaborated especially in the context of relative age, where seniors, associated with the ancestors, are always hierarchically superior to their juniors.

The idea of an importance of consanguinity over affinity in cognatic Southeast Asian societies is not a new insight. Sherry ORTNER (1981), for example, concludes her study of gender and sexuality in hierarchical Polynesian and Southeast Asian societies with the proposition that in cognatic-endogamous types of kinship/marriage organization in Southeast Asia, "kinship *encompasses* and subordinates the significance of marriage" (ibid.: 402, my emphasis).<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, this conclusion seems to be at odds in the case of societies that adhere to 'a patrilineal ideology of asymmetric prescriptive cross-cousin marriage', which is identified by ERRINGTON as being paradigmatic for the 'Eastern Indonesia type'. These societies are usually analyzed in terms of their affinal relations, which are thought to be the pivotal point of their social organization and where it is commonly said that marriage encompasses kinship (cf. HOWELL 1990: 259).

That ERRINGTON'S and ORTNER'S conclusion might be valid for societies of the 'Eastern Indonesian type' too, is proposed by Signe HOWELL (1990: 259), who employs DUMONT'S

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<sup>143</sup> Here I only refer to DUMONT'S model of hierarchical opposition and not to his exhaustive discussion of the relationship between affinity and consanguinity (cf. DUMONT 1983).

<sup>144</sup> It should be noted that ORTNER specifically employs DUMONT'S terminology.



ideas while following FOX's (1980: 13) conception of the 'flow of life' and the reunion of brother and sister in the persons of their children, in an analysis of Lio society on the island of Flores. HOWELL questions the orthodoxy<sup>145</sup> of interpreting 'Eastern Indonesian' affinal groups in terms of the husband/wife locus and focuses in her consideration, instead, on the cross-sex sibling relation.

In the context of kinship terminology HOWELL concludes that the identifying emphasis is on cross-sex siblingship: the terms for wife-givers and wife-takers express consanguinity rather than affinity, equally emphasizing descent and cross-sex siblingship. The wife's group denotes authority, parenthood, fertility, and has ancestral association for the husband and his group. The terms for wife-givers mark women and procreation, elaborating parenthood and cross-sex siblingship, thereby defining both relationships (HOWELL 1990: 252-253). Cosmology and myth also elevate the cross-sex sibling pair among Lio and no equivalence can be found with regard to the conjugal pair. With the prescription on matrilineal cross-cousin marriage<sup>146</sup> the Lio recreate original sibling pairs, while at the same time observing their own prohibitions. Nevertheless, the particularity of their marriage rules creates clear-cut and asymmetric affinal groups over time and with trunk MBD marriages they are able to transform wives back into sisters (ibid.: 258).

HOWELL, thus, indicates that even in this exogamous 'patrilineal' society, which shares all the paradigmatic features of the 'Eastern Indonesian type', consanguinity has at least the same value as affinity. Nevertheless, as the transformation of wives into sisters indicates, affinity and consanguinity reinforce each other and therefore become analytically inseparable. In addition to the valuation of consanguinity, HOWELL stresses the ideological valuation/superiority of women, who are as sisters/wives/sisters associated with the superior exchange unit, a fact that is, nevertheless, ignored on the level of explicit consciousness.

All signs in the cosmology, mythology, and rituals point towards a superior role of women coupled with the superiority of the "female" group – the wife-givers. However, on the level of explicit consciousness among men and women alike this fact is ignored. [...] By itself, cosmo-ritual status does not confer social status (HOWELL 1990: 258-259).<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> The orthodoxy actually denotes LÉVI-STRAUSS' notion of the *house* and its attached emphasis on marriage and the conjugal couple as uniting opposed principles and, the Leiden school's focus on the circulating connubium.

<sup>146</sup> In her article HOWELL writes of "the prescription on *patrilateral* cross-cousin marriage" (cf. HOWELL 1990: 258, my emphasis) which must be a mistake in writing.

<sup>147</sup> I think that a similar conclusion might be discerned in CUNNINGHAM'S study of the Atoni house. "In referring to females as pivotal, I am translating the Atoni idea expressed in the continual association of the *nanan*, or

As HOWELL'S discussion indicates, a full understanding of Lio society and their social organization is only possible if marriage and siblingship as organizing principles and their relation to society as a whole are perceived as inseparably related. Both principles reinforce each other. I believe that this is also the cardinal message to be deduced from ERRINGTON'S study. In order to understand social organization in island Southeast Asia, one has to consider marriage as well as siblingship. The house's symbolic structure represents an appropriate context for these investigations, because the house expresses the relations that are enacted within it. The House represents the symbolic nexus where affinity and consanguinity mutually reinforce each other. An analytic emphasis on either one at the expense of the others will, therefore, inevitably constrain a possible understanding.

Despite my criticism of ERRINGTON'S model, I believe that her comparative analysis of Houses in island Southeast Asia provides valuable insight for further anthropological research in the region, especially since she has managed to move beyond certain limitations of LÉVI-STRAUSS' initial concept of *house* societies. In contrast to LÉVI-STRAUSS' conceptualization of the *house*, which is limited to the context of marriage alliance and thus interprets the house as an *objectification of a relation* (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987: 155) whereby it unites kinship principles generally thought to be mutually exclusive (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 184), ERRINGTON'S conceptualization of the House locates its principal meaning in the context of ritual which marriage is just one aspect of.

I have argued that, if analyzed according to the premises of DUMONT'S concept of hierarchical opposition (DUMONT 1980), ERRINGTON'S conception of the House in island Southeast Asia reveals the existence of hierarchically structured levels that constitute an ideology perceived as a whole with unity as its cardinal value. In this ideology ritual associated with ancestors and symbolized by the unity of cross-sex siblings as consanguines, represents the most encompassing value and the supreme ideological level. Therefore, ritual encompasses marriage which is associated with the living and symbolized by the differentiation of cross-sex siblings as affines. Thus marriage represents a second order value located on a subordinate ideological level that is simultaneously a part of the whole, as well as opposed to it in certain cultural contexts. Thereby, ERRINGTON'S comparison reveals that marriage and siblingship, as well as the respective cross-sex gender relations, cannot be analyzed on their

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center, of the house and the princedom with female elements and symbols. In secular concerns, females are jurally subordinate, as the *nanansi'u* usage or the secular organization of the princedom illustrate. [...] In ritual, however, the reverse is true." (CUNNINGHAM 1973: 230 [1964] original italics)

own since their culture-specific meaning evolves out of their relation to one another and out of their relation to society as a whole.

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