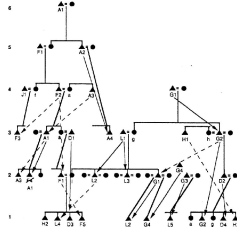


MIWOK MYSTERIES: THE QUESTION OF ASYMMETRIC PRESCRIPTIVE MARRIAGE IN ABORIGINAL NORTH AMERICA



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The Miwok of California stand out as the sole North American society classified by Rodney Needham (1962) as practicing asymmetric prescriptive marriage alliance. This essay reviews evidence from Gifford, the sole ethnographic source on Miwok marriage, and how later commentators (including Lévi-Strauss, Murdock, Kroeber, and Leach) employed Gifford's findings, in order to assess how far and in what ways Needham (1962) may have been correct when he construed the Miwok as practicing prescriptive marriage. Consideration is also given to the Miwok system of symbolic classification, which very probably contributed to Needham's interpretation. Concerning a major aspect of the work of one of the most prominent British anthropologists of the twentieth century, the objective is to illuminate a palpable mystery in the history of anthropological theories of kinship and marriage and to explore aspects of Needham's approach to systems of affinal alliance that have yet to be subjected to a substantial critical treatment. (Rodney Needham, Miwok, prescriptive marriage, kinship and marriage, symbolic classification)

A large part of the corpus of the late Rodney Needham comprised studies, based almost entirely on the published ethnography of others, of societies whose marriage practices hypothetically conformed to what he designated as “prescriptive alliance” or “prescriptive affinal alliance.” The particulars of several such societies are reviewed in *Structure and Sentiment* (1962), the essay in which Needham subjected to a critical test the thesis propounded by Homans and Schneider (1955) concerning unilateral cross-cousin marriage. Homans and Schneider attributed preference for marriage with the matrilineal or patrilineal cross-cousin to differential affective ties between a man and the cross-siblings of his respective parents in societies organized by patrilineal or matrilineal descent. In making their argument, the authors adduced evidence from 33 societies which they claimed supported their theory. A crucial part of Needham's critique consisted of showing how in some of these societies, there was not a simple “preference” for marriage with a certain kind of relative but, on the contrary, a marriage “prescription,” that is, a rule requiring that a person in a particular category be married. And prescriptive systems, according to Needham, were the

proper subject of Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory of kinship and marriage, the theory that Homans and Schneider aimed radically to qualify.

Among the societies Needham adjudged as instances of prescriptive alliance, one stands out. This is the Miwok of central California, a group Needham classified as a society practicing asymmetric prescriptive alliance, which is to say, as prescribing marriage with a category of women reckoned through a man's mother and including the matrilateral cross-cousin, or mother's brother's daughter (hereafter MBD). There are of course many societies, most notably in Southeast Asia, which enjoin or otherwise value marriage alliance in the asymmetric (or matrilateral) mode. However, the Miwok, according to Needham's determination, were unusual in being the only native North American instance of such a system. This essay considers the evidence on which Needham appears to have based his assessment of the Miwok marriage system as prescriptive and what factors may have lead him to this conclusion.

THE MIWOK AND THEIR PLACE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL HISTORY

The Miwok were a food-collecting Penutian-speaking people whose descendants nowadays reside scattered in rural locations of central California. In the 1970s there were "at least two thousand persons of either full, part or mixed (with other tribes) Miwok ancestry," of whom an estimated 400 resided in the Yosemite area (Conrotto 1973:105, citing the American Bureau of Indian Affairs). Since the sixteenth century, when they were first contacted by Europeans, including Sir Francis Drake, Miwok have occupied several parts of California, from the coast to the Sierra Nevada range. By the eighteenth century, they were mainly concentrated in the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Plains Miwok resided in the lower lying region around Sacramento. Coast Miwok inhabited Marin County (to the north of San Francisco Bay), while a group known as Lake Miwok lived further inland, near Clear Lake in Lake County. The latter two groups have been described as "Miwok in origin more than in fact" (Conrotto 1973:2). But whatever their internal cultural and linguistic differences, all populations that have been called Miwok were deleteriously affected by disease (for example, the malaria epidemic of 1833, Bennyhoff 1961:50) and by an influx of Europeans in the nineteenth century, especially during the California gold rush of 1848–1855. Between 1770 and 1910, the population of what Conrotto (1973:18) calls the "Interior Miwok" fell from an estimated 9,000 to 700. Miwok society and culture accordingly experienced radical alterations, but apparently not to an extent that the outlines of an older social system were not discernible in the early part of the twentieth century.

The principal ethnographic source for Miwok marriage practices are the writings of E. W. Gifford, an autodidact anthropologist on the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley, who conducted fieldwork among the Miwok beginning in 1913. By then, Miwok had mostly left a series of lineage hamlets and had come together in several large, multi-lineage villages, including Big Creek and Jamestown (both in Tuolumne County). Gifford (1916:139) distinguishes three dialect groups: the Northern or Amador, Central or Tuolumne, and Southern or Mariposa—a classification that effectively discounts the Coast, Plains, and Lake Miwok. He says little about the size of the Miwok population at this time, other than to mention a sample of 413 people whose names and moiety affiliation he was able to obtain, and 102 as the number of individuals inhabiting Big Creek (Gifford 1916:141, 142). Gifford worked mostly with the Central (or Central Sierra) Miwok, which group includes the Miwok of Tuolumne County. But this distinction is not particularly relevant to the matter at hand, and like Needham, Lévi-Strauss (1949), and others, including Gifford himself, I shall speak simply of Miwok.

In his survey of “prescriptive” systems, Needham (1962) included the Miwok with 21 other groups in a list headed “Patrilineages—matrilateral form preferred” (Needham 1962:55). This wording, it should immediately be noted, is taken directly from Homans and Schneider (1955) and signals substantial agreement with their assessment of Miwok as comprising patrilineal descent groups and practicing marriage with a female matrilateral cross-cousin (MBD). “Preferred,” on the other hand, is soon replaced in Needham’s scheme by “prescribed.” For of the total of 22 cases subsumed in Homans and Schneider’s list, the Miwok are one of only eight societies against whose names Needham (1962:55) writes “prescriptive.”

The contrast of “prescriptive” and “preferential” loomed large not only in Needham’s analyses of particular marriage systems and in his critique of Homans and Schneider, but also in his understanding of Lévi-Strauss’s thesis on “elementary forms” of kinship (Lévi-Strauss 1949, 1969). Towards the beginning of *Structure and Sentiment*, Needham clarifies what he means by “prescription” and “prescriptive.” While preferential marriage allows a choice, an option of marrying a spouse of the preferred sort or some other, a prescriptive system involves no choice: “the category or type of person to be married is precisely determined, and this marriage is obligatory” (Needham 1962:9). He then exemplifies the point by noting that, among the Toba Batak of Sumatra, “marriage is prescribed exclusively with a woman of the category *boru ni tulang*,” a category which as he further notes contains “genealogical specifications” other than MBD, but which categorically excludes FZD, the other, patrilineal variety of cross-cousin (Needham 1962:9). From this it appears that

Needham understood prescriptive systems as allowing marriage with members of only one *named* category of relative. Whether “type of person” is to be understood in this context as anything different from “category” is a matter taken up below.¹

Needham gives no indication of how he arrived at his assessment of Miwok marriage as prescriptive. His characterization of the system draws partly on Homans and Schneider (1955), but otherwise the only sources he cites which include ethnographic information on the Miwok are Murdock’s *Social Structure* (1949), an article by Murdock (1957), and Lévi-Strauss’s *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949). Murdock (1949) is specified by Homans and Schneider (1955:30, 62–63) as their source of information on the Miwok, but in fact the Miwok practice of cross-cousin marriage receives no mention in this work. Needham (1962:54) remarks how “very few ethnographic accounts of sociological value exist” on the Miwok. However, the point—which is incontrovertible—is made not to explain or qualify his own conclusion but to reprove Homans and Schneider for having relied “in nearly every case on a single ethnographic source.” This is ironic, since Needham himself cites no source on the Miwok.² Nowhere does he refer to the work of Gifford, the single published ethnographic authority on Miwok marriage. Nor do Homans and Schneider. But their omission is perhaps more excusable, for contrary to their reference to Murdock (1949), they appear to have derived information on the marriage practices of this and other societies from Murdock’s unpublished “sample of 250 societies” (Homans and Schneider 1955:30) on which Murdock based his 1949 opus.

An idea of the sort of information on Miwok social organization contained in Murdock’s sample of 250 societies may be gained from information he subsequently published on a much larger sample of 565 societies (Murdock 1957). Information in Murdock’s original sample pertaining to the Miwok (the one employed by Homans and Schneider) appears to have been taken entirely from Gifford’s first essay (1916) on Miwok social organization and indigenous culture. In contrast, Murdock’s 1957 article evidently draws on sources other than Gifford’s 1916 essay, most notably on Gifford’s later articles (1926, 1944) on Miwok lineages. However, Murdock’s 1957 article is unlikely to have had a decisive influence on Needham’s interpretation of Miwok marriage or to have accounted for the difference between his evaluation and Homans and Schneider’s. In fact, with regard to marriage with particular relatives, Murdock (1957:683, 672) lists the Miwok as a society in which cross-cousin marriage is “forbidden symmetrically.” This characterization is correct as far as it goes, but it is not clear why Murdock did not classify the Miwok, instead or additionally, as a group in which “matrilateral cross-cousin marriage [is] preferred

asymmetrically, i.e., unions [are] preferred with MoBraDa, [but] forbidden or unreported with FaSiDa” (Murdock 1957:672). This is particularly curious as it is to this category that Murdock assigns the Kachin, Toba Batak, and other Southeast Asian societies which Homans and Schneider treated as preferential, and Needham as prescriptive.

Published in the same year as Murdock’s *Social Structure* (1949), Lévi-Strauss’s *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* makes extensive reference to the Miwok, in contrast to Murdock, Homans and Schneider, and Needham. In fact, Lévi-Strauss’s Chapter 22, “Oblique Marriage,” focuses almost entirely on this society; and in addition to his 1916 article on moieties, it further draws on Gifford’s analyses of Miwok kinship terminology and lineage organization published in 1922, 1926, and 1944. Lévi-Strauss treats the “Miwok system” as an instance of preferential marriage with the MBD and as an example of “generalized exchange,” or asymmetric alliance, involving patrilineages. Apparently supporting Needham’s later claims that Lévi-Strauss’s book was concerned with “prescriptive” systems, Lévi-Strauss further speaks of the “prescribed lineage” among the Miwok as one containing, among other genealogical relatives, a man’s MBD and wife’s brother’s daughter (WBD) (Lévi-Strauss 1969:361–62).³

Instances of questionable wording aside, Lévi-Strauss’s claim that MBD and WBD were among a man’s “authorized spouses” (Lévi-Strauss 1969:358) faithfully summarizes what Gifford reported. Yet his main concern in invoking the Miwok ethnography was to counter Gifford’s interpretation of marriage with the matrilateral cross-cousin (MBD) as having developed from marriage with a wife’s brother’s daughter (WBD), as a privilege transferred from father to son. This Lévi-Strauss accomplished partly with reference to a series of genealogical equations entailed by Miwok kin terms, which he showed to be as consistent with marriage to a mother’s brother’s daughter as they were with marriage to a wife’s brother’s daughter (Lévi-Strauss 1969:364). This review of Miwok terminology, it should be noted, is one of the relatively few instances where Lévi-Strauss systematically adduced terminological usage as evidence for prescriptive, or what he also calls preferential marriage. For Needham, by contrast, “relationship terminology,” or “social classification,” was the principal manifestation of such systems. Accordingly, a series of investigations he published both before and after *Structure and Sentiment* consisted largely of formal analyses of kin terms employed by particular societies. Indeed, he was later to characterize prescription as a property of kinship terminology rather than express rules or actual practices.

Published six years after *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, Homans and Schneider (1955), drawing on Murdock’s ethnographic sample, listed the Miwok as one of twelve societies where “marriage is *allowed or preferred* with

mother's brother's daughter but forbidden or disapproved with father's sister's daughter" (Homans and Schneider 1955:31; emphasis supplied). Nowhere in their essay do they speak of prescription. In their statement that Miwok "allowed" marriage with MBD and at the same time forbade marriage with a father's sister's daughter (FZD), they accurately reflect Gifford's ethnography. But Gifford has a good deal more to say about Miwok society than either Lévi-Strauss or Homans and Schneider report.

Although Needham did not reference Gifford's work in *Structure and Sentiment*, it is not credible that he had not read Gifford's essay of 1916 on Miwok moieties or his later writings on Miwok kinship terminology and lineages (Gifford 1922, 1926, 1944). All these works are referred to in the first edition of *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, and Needham cited the essay on moieties several times in his other work. Clearly, then, he was familiar with Gifford's articles before 1962, and one must conclude that his interpretation of Miwok marriage was based on these and possibly also on Lévi-Strauss's analysis of the same material. The absence of specific reference to the Miwok ethnography finds some illumination in Needham's Introduction to *Structure and Sentiment*, where he states that his "characterizations of certain societies are merely brief indications of features which are important . . ." (Needham 1962:5). These, he further claims, "are based on minute analyses" (implicitly made by himself) which, he explains, are not incorporated into his monograph in order to conserve space (Needham 1962:5); and in the same context, he announces an intention to produce a much longer book on prescriptive alliance. The Miwok do receive a brief mention in a later article on the Anāl of Manipur, in the Indo-Burma border region, where they are compared to the Anāl as a society exhibiting a combination of "exogamous moieties and asymmetric alliance" (Needham 1963:229). In a footnote, Needham then states that "an analysis of the Miwok has been made and will be published in due course" (Needham 1963:229, note 9). That analysis never appeared. Nor of course did the book-length work, although Needham continued to publish analyses of other alliance systems, focusing mostly on terminology.

GIFFORD'S EVIDENCE FOR PRESCRIPTION

Given that Needham was familiar with Gifford's ethnography, the question of why he decided that the Miwok practiced prescriptive marriage, specifically of the asymmetric variety, should overlap with the question of what evidence provided by Gifford would support such a conclusion.

According to Gifford, traditional Miwok society comprised two patrilineal "totemic exogamous moieties" designated as Kikua ("water side") and Tunuka

(“land or dry side”) (Gifford 1916:139). The two groups were also known respectively as the Bullfrog and the Bluejay people, and were each associated with numerous kinds of natural and meteorological phenomena as well as manufactured objects.⁴ The two groups were bound by a ritual reciprocity, most notably caring for the dead and washing mourners of the opposite moiety (Gifford 1916:145–46). Both moieties included patrilineal and patrilocal “lineages” which originally resided separately in their own hamlets (Gifford 1926). Whether the moieties also were in any sense territorially discrete, as the designations “land” and “water” might suggest, is not clear, but both the moieties and the localized lineages were exogamous.

Referring mainly to the Central Sierra Miwok, Gifford (1916:189) reports that everyone he asked “stated that the proper mate for a man was a woman who stood in the relation of *anisü* to him, providing she was not too closely related to him.” For a woman, the reciprocal category was *añsi*. Subsumed in the men’s category *anisü* were MyZ, FBW (younger than M), MBD, MBSD, stepmother, and mother’s later co-wife (Gifford 1916:172). Accordingly, a woman’s *añsi* included her eZS, HBS, FZS, FFZS, co-wife’s S, and stepson. Gifford further speaks of the “popularity” of *anisü*-*añsi* marriage and, because spouses sometimes claimed this relationship even when it could not be substantiated genealogically, he infers that such marriages “must have been the vogue” (Gifford 1916:189). All women a man classified as *anisü* would have been in the exogamous patrilineal moiety opposite his own and for this reason should have been available as spouses. Gifford further states that FZD, terminologically distinguished from other marriageable women as *lupuba*, was absolutely prohibited to a man (Gifford 1916:189). This prohibition lends an asymmetric cast to Miwok marriage rules, since the rule of moiety exogamy alone would not have excluded the FZD, who also would necessarily have been in the moiety opposite to male ego’s. Among other women in the opposite moiety, a man was further prohibited from marrying ZD, a woman related as *tomu* (MeZ, FBW older than M, and “mother’s earlier co-wife”), or a woman related as *oiyame* (“daughter-in-law,” BSW, and SWZ; Gifford 1916:173, 174, 182).

At the same time, not all female kin a man classified as *anisü* (or as members of the “proper” category) were marriageable, as Gifford’s qualification regarding a prospective wife being “not too closely related” makes clear. A man could not marry an *anisü* related as MyZ. Evidently Gifford refers here to an actual sister of the mother, for he adds that “there seems to be no objection . . . to a man marrying his *anisü* who is his mother’s collateral sister” (Gifford 1916:181–82). Citing an instance of such a union from Miwok genealogies, he refers, for example, to MMZD. However, a man could marry the widow of a deceased brother (called *olo*), as well as a wife’s sister (WZ), wife’s brother’s daughter

(WBD), and wife's father's sister (WFZ)—these last three relatives all being classified as *wokli* (Gifford 1916:182). And he could also marry a MBSD (Gifford 1916:182), another relative designated as *anisü* but who, in the case of first marriage to a MBD, would be equivalent to WBD (*wokli*).

Oddly, Gifford does not comment on whether *anisü* related as FBW (younger than M), stepmother, or mother's later co-wife were marriageable. Since he found no evidence for polyandry (Gifford 1916:183), one must infer that all three specifications referred to widows. In any event, it is reasonable to suppose that the same qualification applied to these relatives as to a MyZ (who might well have been simultaneously a FBW, stepmother, or mother's later co-wife). Hence it appears that, as the term for a man's "proper mate," *anisü* effectively included only MBD, MBSD, and more distantly related women such as MMZD.

From the foregoing it should be obvious that a man could marry women in more than one named kin category, specifically *anisü* and *wokli*. This in itself may account for the equivocal statement that "a man *may sometimes* marry his *anisü*" (Gifford 1916:181; emphasis supplied). On the other hand, the phrasing could allude instead to the fact that not all types of *anisü* were marriageable, or that in some instances only "collateral," or classificatory relatives (perhaps including, for example, MFBD or FFBSW) were allowed. Citing Gifford (1916:190), Lévi-Strauss refers to the remarks of a female informant who told the ethnographer that some female relatives are "too much like [a man's] mother" to be married (Lévi-Strauss 1969:362). But whereas Lévi-Strauss offers this in support of his argument that, practically speaking, only a man's MBD and WBD were eligible as spouses, what Gifford in fact reported was a woman from Jamestown telling him that a man's MBD was too much like his mother and thus not an appropriate marriage partner. What is more, this is adduced as evidence of "a sentiment at Jamestown against the marriage of first cousins" which implicitly contrasts with what was found among Miwok elsewhere. Also located in Tuolumne County, Jamestown lies in the territory of the Central Sierra Miwok but is geographically distinct from Big Creek, where Gifford appears to have conducted the bulk of his investigations. In Madera County, Gifford was similarly told by Southern Sierra Miwok that *anisü*-*añsi* marriage was proper only if the "contracting parties" were "distantly related" (Gifford 1916:190).⁵

As noted, the most general feature of Miwok social organization was a binary division into patrilineal exogamous moieties. By the second decade of the twentieth century, some 25 percent of actual marriages breached the prohibition on marrying within one's own moiety and, largely it seems from local demographic imbalance between the two groups, Gifford (1916:141) infers that the "exogamic rules of the moieties were not strictly adhered to even before the coming of the whites." Nevertheless, all evidence indicates that the moieties were

exogamous in principle. Thus, when a woman married a non-Miwok, their children would be considered as belonging to the moiety opposite to that of the mother, and they would be given personal names appropriate to that moiety (Gifford 1916:147). Yet another indication of the value attached to moiety exogamy was a possible practice of reclassifying kin when incorrect endogamous marriages were contracted, something accomplished by the application of terms normally used for persons in other generations (Gifford 1916:181).⁶

Although Gifford (1916:141) initially stated that Miwok moieties had “no subdivisions,” in 1923 he discovered that each moiety was comprised of a number of localized patrilineages (*nena*), which were also exogamous, and as one might expect, more strictly so than the moieties (Gifford 1926:389, 1944:376). It is worth giving some attention to the nature of these lineages, not least because they appear strikingly similar to the localized descent groups, consisting of three generations of co-resident males, which Leach (1961:56) showed to be basic to the operation of systems of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, or what Needham called “asymmetric prescriptive alliance.” Miwok lineages were always named after a place; accordingly, the lineage name was always a place name, and the term *nena* also referred to a hamlet, or former hamlet, “the ancestral home in which a lineage is supposed to have arisen” (Gifford 1926:389). Although by the time Gifford wrote most Miwok had left their original lineage homes and had amalgamated into larger multi-lineage villages, all Miwok he questioned still knew their *nena* (lineage). It was formerly an “independent autonomous political unit” which had a hereditary chief and owned land in which all lineage members shared rights of use (Gifford 1926:389). Gifford recorded lists of members for 80 lineages, but how complete this total was in relation to the entire Miwok population is not indicated (Gifford 1944:376). He also offers no statement of the typical depth of the lineages. Genealogical information on 20 lineages for which Gifford compiled “the longest lists of members” (Gifford 1944:376), however, suggests they may have comprised no more than five generations, while other statements similarly indicate that they were small, genealogically shallow groups (Gifford 1944:377–79).⁷ Alternatively designating them as “patrilineal joint families” (Gifford 1944:389), Gifford thus describes a Miwok lineage as a “small group of closely related people.” He further states that lineage members usually knew their exact relationship to one another (Gifford 1944:390), and estimates that “in most cases” lineage membership did not exceed 50 people “exclusive of married-in females of other lineages” (Gifford 1944:393).

While formerly autonomous, lineages maintained friendly relations with other lineages, “particularly *those from which wives were drawn* and those whose members attended ceremonial gatherings” sponsored by a given lineage, and in which people of the opposite moiety were involved (Gifford 1944:390; emphasis

supplied). This wording is significant. Not only is it the sole mention Gifford makes of marriage in relation to the lineages (other than specifying them as exogamous), but it can reasonably be taken as an indication that lineages regularly took wives from specific other lineages, or in other words that they were related to one another, in a more than transitory manner, as wife-givers and wife-takers.

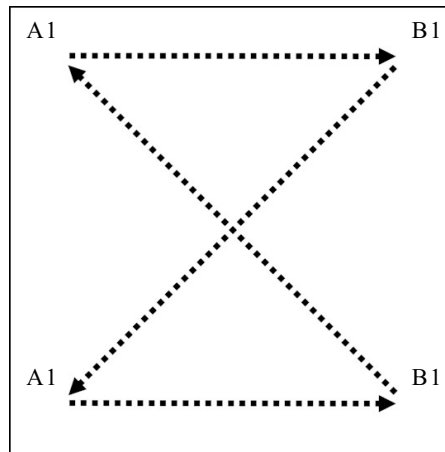
From the information Gifford provided on kin terms and permitted and prohibited marriages, it is clear that all women whom a man was able to marry were natal members of the opposite moiety. But it is equally obvious that women belonging to some lineages within this moiety were, like women belonging to all lineages in his own moiety, prohibited as wives. Specifically, these would have been lineages into which a man's father's sisters had married, and which therefore contained male ego's father's sister's daughters, members of the prohibited category *lupuba*. We do not know how far the term for FZD was applied to more distantly but similarly related women who, given patrilineal descent, would have been positionally equivalent to FZD; for example, those genealogically specifiable as FFBDD or FMZDD. However, a classificatory principle equating same-sex siblings is quite pervasive in the Miwok terminology (see Gifford 1916:184–85) and strongly suggests that FFBDD, for example, would have been classified as *lupuba* and hence prohibited as a wife. One cannot be absolutely certain that the natal lineage of the FZD, in the opposite moiety, might yet have contained some women who, by contrast to genealogical FZD, could have been considered possible spouses. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable inference that a Miwok man would have distinguished lineages in the opposite moiety on the basis of whether their female members were marriageable or, in other words, as potential wife-givers and wife-takers (that is, lineages whose men could take women from his own).

In view of the foregoing, one can envisage Miwok marriage as operating minimally with four lineages, two in each of the two moieties, as in the Figure on page 11. Using A and B for the two moieties, and 1 and 2 to distinguish lineages within these moieties, in accordance with the asymmetric marriage rules A1 would give women in marriage to B1, who would give wives to A2, who in turn would give wives to B2, who would then give women to A1. This scheme is precisely the same as that proposed in Needham's analysis of the Aimol of the Indo-Burma border (Needham 1960a). It is also identical to the scheme Needham proffered in his later analysis of the Anãl (1963:228–29), culturally and linguistically closely related neighbors of the Aimol. Like the Miwok, both Aimol and Anãl possess exogamous moieties (although unequally ranked in the two societies, and unnamed among the Aimol) while operating a system of asymmetric prescriptive alliance. Among the Miwok, as among the Anãl and

Aimol, each of the four groups illustrated in the Figure would be related as wife-giver to one group in the opposite moiety and as wife-taker to another. In reality, of course, we should expect any lineage to take wives from more than one lineage in the opposite moiety and, by the same token, to give women to two or more different lineages in that moiety. Even so, the model resolves what might initially appear to be a problem of how asymmetric alliance (operating with a minimum of three alliance groups and distinguishing wife-givers from wife-takers) operates in a system with exogamous moieties. At one level ($A \rightarrow B \rightarrow A$) the moieties directly exchange women. But at the level of the lineages, women are exchanged only indirectly since in the Figure, lineage A1 takes wives not from B1 but from B2. A closed cycle of marriage alliances would therefore minimally comprise four groups: $A1 \rightarrow B1 \rightarrow A2 \rightarrow B2 (\rightarrow A1)$.

Figure

Hypothetical Scheme of Miwok Asymmetric Marriage Alliance



A and B denote the moieties; 1 and 2 distinguish lineages within each moiety. Arrows indicate the direction in which women are transferred in marriage.

In a system such as this, the ideal spouse for a man (in the sense of simultaneously fulfilling both negative and positive marriage rules and belonging to the same generation as ego) is a genealogical MBD. Yet as previously noted,

Gifford interpreted matrilineal cross-cousin marriage among the Miwok as a relatively recent development from what he considered an earlier kind of union, namely marriage with a WBD. He appears to have done so for two reasons. First, he was evidently puzzled by the fact that Miwok allowed one form of cross-cousin marriage, even valuing it as the most “popular” marriage, while at the same time tabooing the other form (that is, marriage with the FZD). Accordingly, he refers to “the mystery of the one-sided Miwok cross-cousin marriage” (Gifford 1916:191). For Gifford, it seems, cross-cousin marriage was cross-cousin marriage (see also Gifford 1916:193), and his understanding of Miwok rules in no measure foreshadowed later structuralist insights regarding the very different formal entailments of the two sorts of marriage with unilateral cross-cousins. The binary division into two moieties, directly exchanging various ceremonial services, likely added to his puzzlement, in which respect it is important to recall that, at the time he wrote his 1916 essay on the moieties, Gifford “knew nothing about lineages among the Miwok” (Gifford 1944:376).

A second reason why Gifford considered marriage with the WBD as prior to MBD marriage concerns kin terminology. Gifford isolated 12 terminological usages which he presented as “reflections” of WBD marriage (Gifford 1916:186). At the same time, he claimed there were no terms that reflected marriage with MBD (Gifford 1916:190). Invoking a cultural historical principle, an implicit theory of survivals according to which greater numbers of such terminological “reflections” indicated the relative antiquity of a custom, Gifford inferred that WBD marriage among Miwok must have preceded marriage with MBD, and furthermore that the latter practice had derived from the former owing to a father’s transfer of rights in his WBD to his son. The only indications of the antiquity of marriage between a MBD and a FZS, according to Gifford, were a speech taboo imposed on a man and his MBW, the same taboo as was applied to a man’s actual mother-in-law (WM), and the report of two informants who, by contrast to five others, gave the term for DH as the term for HZS (Gifford 1916:190–91). Following a similar logic, Gifford endeavoured to explain the prohibition of FZD on the grounds that this woman is the ZD of a man’s father. Since a woman cannot marry her MB, she was therefore forbidden to the father, and this prohibition was “extended” to a man’s son (Gifford 1916:192–93). With regard to the hypothetical development of MBD marriage, he further speculates that a father might have “paid for his wife’s brother’s daughter and then let his son marry her” (Gifford 1916:192). This is apparently the only allusion Gifford makes to brideweath among the Miwok. On the other hand, Murdock (1957:683, 671) classifies the Miwok as a society in which “any significant material consideration in marriage” is absent.

It should be emphasized that, by “reflecting” marriage, Gifford does not refer to terms which equate cognatic kin with affines as is typical of prescriptive classifications (where, for example, MBD might be equated with BW, MBS with WB, or MB with WF). As he himself remarks (Gifford 1916:190), equations of this sort are entirely absent from Miwok terminology. Rather, the usages which Gifford construed as reflecting marriage with WBD all entail cross-generational equations linking specifications in one genealogical level with specifications in an adjacent level. As the majority of these equations terminologically identify genealogical specifications that would belong to the same descent group in a patrilineal system, they exemplify kin term usages that have classically been designated as Omaha (see Murdock 1949:240, who classifies Miwok terminology more specifically as “Normal Omaha”). Murdock (1949:224), defines “Omaha” as distinguishing FZD and MBD and equating FZD and ZD or MBD and MZ. All these features occur in the Miwok classification. Of the 12 Miwok equations, only two are straightforwardly consistent with marriage between a WBD and FZH, namely, WB=WBS and ZH=FZH.⁸ The others, by contrast, all assume an equivalence between co-wives in polygynous marriages or marriage with widows (see e.g., MZ=MBD, MB=MBS, FZD (w.s)=C, FSC (m.s.)=ZC).⁹

Whatever the force of these qualifications, it is relevant that societies might terminologically identify even WB and WBS and ZH and FZH for reasons other than those adduced by Gifford for the Miwok. In fact, such equations regularly occur in better attested systems of asymmetric prescriptive alliance, as for example among the Southeast Asian Purum who equate WB and WBS, and also FZC and ZC and MB and MBS (Needham 1962:77). Similarly, the Kédang of eastern Indonesia equate ZH (man speaking) and FZH, as well as WB and WBS and MB and MBS (Barnes 1974:266), while the last pair of equations further occurs among the equally prescriptive Mambai of East Timor (Hicks 1978:106). The Lamet of Laos, also, equate MB and MBS and FZH and ZH (Needham 1960b).

It must be stressed that, unlike Miwok terminology, in these latter classifications the several equations co-exist with others that identify cognatic and affinal specifications. For example, among the eastern Indonesian Kédang, FZH is also identified with ZHF, and ZH with FZS, while another term applies equally to MBS and WB, and to MB and WF. Similarly, Purum terminology equates FZS and ZH, MBS and WB, and MB and WF (Needham 1962:77). The more important point is that all these equations are consistent with systems of asymmetric alliance, in which it is the matrilineal cross-cousin (MBD), and not the WBD, that is the preferred wife. This applies even though, in Kédang and among the Mambai and Purum, WBD falls in the same kin category as does MBD. In Kédang, a man may take a WBD or a MBSD (both called *mahan*) as a

second wife; yet the most preferred spouse in this society is a genealogical MBD (also called *mahan*; Barnes 1974:240, 257). As Lévi-Strauss pointed out in his critique of Gifford, marriage with WBD and with MBD are equally consistent with a rule of “generalized exchange” (Lévi-Strauss 1969:364), or “asymmetric prescriptive alliance” as Needham was later to call it. And this is because both women belong to groups that, by definition, have previously given wives to a man’s own.

But there is an even more fundamental objection to Gifford’s thesis. As Lévi-Strauss (1969:120) also noted, WBD marriage is necessarily a secondary or what he called a “privileged” union since it obviously assumes that a man is a widower or already has a wife. It is therefore difficult to see why a pattern of kin terms, and particularly a general tendency to equate relatives in adjacent levels, should be the specific outcome of a form of marriage which in all probability was very rare. Gifford provides little information on the incidence of Miwok polygyny. Whatever the precise value Miwok placed on MBD marriage, moreover, it is clear that WBD could not in any sense be prescribed. Such a woman could conceivably have been preferred, but only as a second wife. The only possible suggestion of a particular value on WBD-FZH marriage is Gifford’s statement that “in some cases, if [a WBD] were too young for him to marry, she was held for him until she had reached the marriageable age . . .” (Gifford 1916:186). On the other hand, Gifford interprets other terminological evidence as indicating that Miwok co-wives were usually sisters (Gifford 1916:188–89). Apparently on this basis Murdock (1957:683, 671) interpreted the sororal form as the “preferential” or “more common” type of Miwok polygyny.

Given that a man’s “proper mate” was an *anisü*, a category that prominently included the MBD but excluded WBD (classified as *wokli*), it is obvious that the possibility of marriage with the latter relative entailed potential conflict or competition between father and son over the same woman, as Gifford (1916:191) himself recognized. It is probable, therefore, that Miwok possessed a rule stipulating that a WBD could be married only in certain circumstances. Such a stipulation is found among the Rindi of Sumba, an eastern Indonesian people who, while allowing a man to marry a WBD or MBSD (both classified as *dawa*) may do so only when “there is no one in the first descending genealogical level from ego eligible to take her as a wife” (Forth 1981:331). Such a woman is deemed especially suitable as a spouse when the natal group of a man’s mother has no *balu* (MBD; also MFBSD, MMZSD, and MMBDD) available for marriage (Forth 1981:331).

As the foregoing suggests, the possibility of marrying a WBD, whether or not this relative is terminologically distinguished from MBD, is hardly inconsistent with asymmetric alliance, conceived as a system prescribing marriage with a

matrilateral cross-cousin or another woman belonging to a group from which ego's mother derived or to another group from which men of one's own have previously taken wives. In Rindi, the possibility of marrying a WBD or MBSD follows from the fact that the prescribed union for a man is with a woman in the kin category (*balu*) whose focal and most preferred instance is MBD (Forth 1981). This in a sense is the inverse of what Gifford proposed for the Miwok. Nevertheless, Gifford's interpretation was not entirely without merit; its value lies in the suggestion that marriage with a WBD and with a MBD were somehow connected in this society, and more particularly that a relation of wife-taker and wife-giver was heritable between adjacent generations.

As shown by the example of the Rindi of eastern Sumba, it would require an extreme definition to argue that the possibility of WBD-FZH marriage contradicts or compromises the status of a system as one of *prescriptive* alliance, even when, as in both eastern Sumba and among the Miwok, these relatives are classified separately from MBD and FZS. Still, it is necessary to recall that, in *Structure and Sentiment*, Needham (1962:9) defined a prescriptive system as one in which "the category or type of person to be married is precisely determined." While examples he provides may suggest as much, it is noteworthy that Needham does not actually state that the prescribed category must be named. The addition of the word "type" may also suggest that a marriage prescription could be expressed in another way, for example, with a descriptive phrase or by qualifying a single named category so as to exclude certain genealogical specifications as possible spouses. Not only is this done with Miwok *anisü*; it is evidently resorted to in several other systems adjudged to be prescriptive by Needham, where the named category that includes MBD further subsumes a man's own sister or mother. One example is Purum *nau*, which equates MBD (BW, WBD) with yZ and MZDy as well as with a number of male relatives (Needham 1962:77). Although Needham does not explicitly classify them as prescriptive, the Mapuche of Chile, whose term for MBD (*ñuke*) also includes M, MZ, and FBW, may be another such case. Thus he describes Mapuche as employing a non-prescriptive terminology "in such a way as to contract their constantly unilateral marriages" (Needham 1967:43). For Miwok, yet another method of articulating a marriage prescription could have been the specification of potential wives as women in the opposite moiety in lineages not previously related as wife-takers (or that did not include lupuba, FZD, ZD) and who were not closely related to one's mother. Even if one were to insist on a single named prescribed category as a necessary criterion of a prescriptive system, moreover, the Miwok might still qualify. For although one could marry either an *anisü* or a *wokli*, there was in this context evidently no choice when a bachelor came to take his first wife. Unless, perhaps, his sole wife were a brother's widow, he could, it seems, only marry an *anisü*.

In deciding how Miwok might be judged prescriptive, there is more to be said about Needham's definition, and more particularly about how far he allowed the possibility of a system being prescriptive in the absence of a prescriptive terminology. In an article entitled "Prescription," Needham reinforced his earlier conception of a prescriptive marriage system as one defined primarily by kinship terminology or "social classification." That is, one that regularly equates cognatic and affinal specifications or one in which "lines and categories" are articulated by "a constantly repeated . . . affinal connexion" (Needham 1973:174). However, it seems there can be more to prescription than terminology, and that rules and manifest patterns of behavior may play a part in the definition of prescriptive systems. Thus Needham claims that a "jural definition of prescription" which leaves out "the categories of social classification" is incomplete (note: not untenable or impossible), and he then speaks of "a system of prescriptive alliance" being best defined (that is, not only or necessarily defined) "by reference to the terminology" (Needham 1973:175). But the clearest statement that prescription can apply to more than terminology is Needham's claim that "prescribed marriage is logically quite distinct from a prescriptive terminology: there is no necessary correspondence between categories and social action, and therefore neither can be inferred from the other" (Needham 1973:177).

In this regard, Needham's treatment of the marriage system of the Mapuche (1967, 1973) is again instructive. He characterizes Mapuche terminology as "lineal non-prescriptive" (Needham 1973:173). Yet he also classes this society with the Southeast Asian Kachin and Garo, as possessing "a marriage rule *prescribing* a regular unilateral transfer of women among lineal descent groups, by 'matrilateral' marriage" (Needham 1973:173, emphasis supplied). Previously as well, he had spoken of the Mapuche as practicing asymmetric affinal alliance (Needham 1967:42, 43) and specifically as manifesting, through their strong "preference" for marriage with a matrilateral cross-cousin, a "social ideal of which MBD marriage is the genealogical and affective . . . expression" and which "applies *generally and systematically to the relationships between descent groups throughout the society*" (Needham 1967:42; emphasis supplied). Here, Needham comes close to contradicting previous claims (see e.g., Needham 1973:175) that a marriage preference cannot constitute a system. In spite of all this, Needham never unequivocally applied "prescriptive" or "prescription" to the Mapuche system as a whole; in fact, he appears to have assiduously avoided doing so. Nevertheless, it seems that he may well have considered Mapuche marriage to be fundamentally identical to the Miwok system which, of course, he did classify as prescriptive. Among terminological equations shared by the Mapuche and Miwok, one may selectively point to: MZ=FBW=MBD (also M in Mapuche) and MB=MBS (also MBSS in Mapuche).

CIRCUMSTANTIAL FACTORS

One cannot know precisely on what grounds Needham determined Miwok marriage to be prescriptive. Nevertheless, a review of Gifford's ethnography shows how the evidence could well support such a determination, just as consideration of Needham's analytical practice, both prior and subsequent to *Structure and Sentiment*, suggests how he might have made the case. Although certain genealogical relatives within the class were excluded, the prescribed category for a Miwok man was anisü, and for a woman añsi. In addition, female members of the category wokli, including WBD, WZ, and WFZ, could be taken in privileged unions which did not affect the structure of the system but, on the contrary, reinforced it (see Forth 1981:331, where the same point is made with reference to WBD-FZH marriage among the Sumbanese).

In addition to the evidence of marriage rules and kin terms, there are two circumstantial factors that could explain Needham's interpretation of the Miwok as prescriptive: one historical and the other theoretical. It should first be appreciated that Needham's 1962 monograph was constructed not only as a criticism of Homan's and Schneider's psychological explanation of cross-cousin marriage, but also as a defense of Lévi-Strauss's (1949) structural theory. Needham's support for Lévi-Strauss's book was by no means unqualified, and he complains about (unspecified) "ethnographic errors and misinterpretations of the facts" (1962:3). Nevertheless, he proclaims the work to be "a masterpiece, a sociological classic of the first rank" (1962:2). As Lévi-Strauss gave a substantially correct account of Gifford's ethnography, and because he apparently construed Miwok marriage as prescriptive (especially in his reference to the "prescribed lineage" among the Miwok), Needham may therefore have been inclined to interpret it in the same way. Lévi-Strauss later registered disagreement with Needham's understanding of "prescriptive" and the distinction with "preferential." As a result, Needham effectively parted company with Lévi-Strauss, and whereas previously he had regularly spoken of "structure" and "structural analysis," he became chary of these concepts and began to abjure the very terms. This breach, however, did not occur until 1967, with the appearance of the second French edition of Lévi-Strauss's *Les structures élémentaires*, thus well after Needham had published his verdict on the Miwok.

Lévi-Strauss's interpretation was not the only precedent that may have affected Needham's determination. In a review of previous anthropological applications of "prescription" and "prescriptive" to marriage systems, Needham (1973:167) cites with obvious approval Kroeber's interpretation of the Miwok as practicing "statutory marriage" (1917:384, citing Gifford 1916). This Needham explicitly understood as a synonym for marriage prescription, and

with reference to Kroeber's observation that "certain forms of . . . statutory marriage" among the Miwok "have helped to shape and color kinship terms," he further interpreted Kroeber's usage as implying that marriage in this society operated with a "categorical directive" (Needham 1973:176). By "categorical directive," Needham apparently did not mean that Miwok terminology unequivocally included a prescribed category, but that it entailed a consistency between the kin classification and marriage possibilities, or at any rate that Kroeber saw it thus. What significance might be attached to the fact that Kroeber refers, in the plural, to "certain forms . . . of statutory marriage" is unclear, since he seems only to refer to Gifford's thesis regarding the effects of WBD marriage on Miwok terminology. Given this apparent focus, Needham's interpretation of Kroeber's assessment of the Miwok is curious, particularly as he must have been aware of Lévi-Strauss's criticism of Gifford, and in view of his own tendency to view prescription as pertaining to a single category of relationship.

Contrary to what might be expected, Needham did not refer to Kroeber's 1917 paper in *Structure and Sentiment*, but he did cite Leach's (1961) equally famous essay on the "structural implications of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage." In a statement critical of Gifford's interpretation of MBD marriage as deriving from a father's relegation of his right to marry a WBD (Gifford 1922:256), Leach remarks that "Gifford does not appear to have recognized that such an arrangement would imply a special continuing relationship between the 'wife taking lineage' on the one hand and the 'wife giving lineage' on the other" (Leach 1961:65). While Leach does not expressly designate the Miwok as prescriptive, it is clear from his reference to wife-givers and wife-takers, and from the general context of his observation, that he tended to interpret Miwok marriage practice as comparable to that of the Kachin of Burma, probably the most thoroughly described and analyzed instance of asymmetric prescriptive alliance in the literature.

Pertaining to theory rather than historical precedent, another kind of factor arguably inclining Needham to an understanding of Miwok as practicing prescriptive marriage concerns his more general conception of societies in which asymmetric prescriptive alliance occurs. From the time he published his first analysis of the Purum system in 1958, Needham construed this form of marriage ideology and practice as but one aspect, albeit a major one, of a total system or structure that found expression in a comprehensive "symbolic classification." Among peoples like the Purum and Aimol, Needham went so far as to claim, this classification, typically comprising categories of the most diverse kinds (including genders, lateral terms, direction categories, colors, spiritual entities, and so on), "orders both social life and the cosmos," so that social organization, including the regulation of marriage, is "ideologically part of a cosmological

conceptual order and is governed identically by its ruling ideas” (Needham 1962:96; and see 1960a:99, 106, regarding the symbolic classification of the Aimol). Of particular relevance to this essay is the fact that, according to Needham, the symbolic classifications that are integral to systems of asymmetric prescriptive marriage characteristically display a dualistic form. That is, despite the fact that such a system requires a minimum of three alliance groups in order to operate, the classification is a conceptual ordering of pairs, one of which is the social relational dyad of wife-giver and wife-taker (Needham 1960a:101).

The point to appreciate is that the Miwok evidently possessed such a comprehensively dualistic system of classification (see Needham’s 1979 monograph entitled *Symbolic Classification*, where he mentions the Miwok system in ten different places). What is more, the classification possessed a pronounced social or social structural aspect, since it coincided with, or incorporated, the two exogamous moieties to which all Miwok, and all Miwok patrilineages, belonged (the land side or Bluejay people and the water side or Bullfrog people). Further subsumed in this dual division were a great number of animals and plants, meteorological phenomena, and artifacts. Indeed, so comprehensive was it of biological species and other natural phenomena recognized and named by the Miwok that Gifford could proclaim that “all nature is divided between land and water” (Gifford 1916:142).

Miwok dual symbolic classification differed from dualistic classifications encountered among the Purum and a variety of other societies (Needham [ed.] 1973). Whereas the latter typically comprise various kinds of category pairs (for example, male and female and left and right), the land and water side divisions of the Miwok constituted little more than a division of people, or human groups, and of natural species and other natural phenomena. Evidently, it was this linking of people and natural kinds that led Gifford to characterize the moieties as “totemic” (Gifford 1916:142), in spite of the fact that belief in descent from animals and plants was lacking and moiety membership entailed no taboos or ritual obligations in respect of associated species. In further contrast, other instances of dual symbolic classification (including those accompanying better attested systems of prescriptive alliance, with prescriptive terminologies) typically do not incorporate zoological and botanical categories, although quadripartite and more complex systems sometimes do (Forth n.d.). While each of the Miwok moieties was associated with dozens of biological kinds, particular animals and plants were not linked with the individual lineages comprised in the moieties. In fact, the only connection between humans and the natural species appears to have consisted in personal names. Although not usually referring directly to an animal or plant, each Miwok personal name was understood as alluding to some characteristic of a species belonging to a person’s moiety. At the

same time, a minority of species, phenomena, and manufactured objects were in this way associated with both moieties, and it is further noteworthy that, while the moieties were named as land and water side respectively, the species that as it were belonged to each were not always animals or plants naturally associated with the water or land. Finally, according to Gifford, Miwok personal names, although associated with biological kinds in turn linked with the moieties, did not regulate marriage (Gifford 1916:164).

Yet regardless of the peculiarities of Miwok dual classification, the existence of two groupings among the Miwok, equally conceptual and social, is likely to have significantly influenced Needham's understanding of the overall form, or total scheme, of Miwok society and culture. Whatever doubts may have been occasioned by the patently non-prescriptive character of their kin terminology or the incomplete details of their indigenous social life, the comprehensive binary scheme, formally similar to what Needham had already encountered among the Purum and other Southeast Asian peoples, could very well have been decisive in his interpretation of their marriage system as one of prescriptive alliance.

CONCLUSIONS

When I began researching this paper I anticipated that the evidence might well not support Needham's characterization of Miwok marriage as prescriptive. A closer reading of Gifford's ethnography and subsequent commentary on this, however, suggest that the system could indeed be characterized as prescriptive, even as Needham deployed the term. This conclusion holds in spite of the fact that Needham's use of the concept was variable and sometimes equivocal. Equally germane is Needham's tendency, especially in his early analyses of marriage systems in Southeast Asia, to raise questions regarding the reliability of ethnographic reports of particular terminological usages, an approach which he could conceivably have applied to aspects of Gifford's Miwok ethnography. This is not to criticize Gifford, who by all indications was a skilled and practiced ethnographer. However, by the time he conducted his enquiries, the Miwok had experienced nearly a century of far-reaching social and cultural change which may well have affected indigenous kin classification as well as marriage practice. In addition, Gifford's understanding of cross-cousin marriage, and particularly the matrilateral variety, which he described as a "mystery," was evidently limited.

As a general property of a social system, affinal prescription may best be regarded as an ideal type which in different instances and in varying degrees finds expression in kinship terminology, marriage rules, and institutions or manifest patterns of social action.¹⁰ Employing another concept invoked with some regularity by Needham, prescriptive systems are usefully considered as a "poly-

thetic class" (Needham 1975), that is, a class whose members share overlapping but, in any two instances, possibly quite dissimilar properties. Suggesting another mystery, it is curious that Needham never unambiguously characterized prescriptive marriage systems in this way, preferring instead to shore up and defend an absolute definition.¹¹ It is also a pity, since in the end this definition arguably failed him and detracted from an otherwise worthwhile anthropological endeavor.

Why did Needham's announced intention of publishing an analysis of Miwok marriage alliance never come to fruition? It is not unusual for publication plans to change in the course of a scholarly career, and they can do so for many reasons. However, the progress of Needham's work on prescriptive systems in the 1960s suggests a specific possibility. As the record indicates, by the middle of that decade Needham had become increasingly committed to a conception of prescription as primarily a matter of classification. The patently nonprescriptive terminology of the Miwok obviously did not fit this view. Arguably, Needham's 1967 paper might have employed the Mapuche, rather than the Miwok, to illustrate a society with a non-prescriptive kin classification nevertheless inclined to contract asymmetric (or matrilateral) alliances. But as noted, he never actually designated the Mapuche as an unqualified instance of a prescriptive system, whereas in his critique of Homans and Schneider (Needham 1962), this was precisely his evaluation of the Miwok.

NOTES

1. In order to reduce complexity and avoid redundancy, like Needham and other proponents of structural analysis of marriage systems I shall refer to rules and usages as they apply to males. Such a qualification is increasingly requisite in the present era of gender equality, and my only excuse is that to repeat everything from a female perspective would be extremely tedious, for the reader and the writer. One could of course adopt an exclusively female point-of-view, but quite apart from anything else, this would virtually preclude comparison with the original sources.
2. Although more generally directed, one might here be reminded of Landy's evaluation of *Structure and Sentiment* as "a brilliant book, and irritating, which it undoubtedly was meant to be" (Landy 1964:277).
3. Hereafter, genealogical relatives are indicated with the following standard abbreviations: F=father, M=mother, B=brother, Z=sister, S=son, D=daughter, C=child, H=husband, and W=wife.
4. "Bluejay" cannot refer to the Blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), which does not occur west of the Rocky mountains, and must therefore mean either the Steller's jay (*C. stelleri*) or the Scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), both of which are also predominantly blue, Californian birds.
5. In addition to men's marriages, Gifford (1916:182, 188) discusses a series of possible and prohibited women's marriages, all of which are consistent with the rules as applied to men.
6. One might be reminded here of the possibility of reclassifying spouses in the case of incorrect marriage (with FZD, for example) among the asymmetric prescriptive Purum of the Indo-Burma border (Needham 1962:87). Although not firmly attested, the possibility of similar classificatory

adjustment among the Miwok may have been a factor, albeit a minor one, inducing Needham to characterize their marriage system as prescriptive.

7. Of the 20 lineages, six included two generations, seven included three, six included four, and one included five. In six cases (including the one with five generations), there were other known patrilineal relatives whose exact relationship to other lineage members Gifford did not record and whose existence could indicate greater lineage depth. Twelve of the lineages belonged to the land moiety and eight to the water moiety.

8. A general tendency to equate “two or more relationships in different generations” (Gifford 1916:170) is shown by the fact that, of a total of 34 Central Miwok terms, as many as 21 reveal this feature.

9. Gifford does not explicate this equivalence. Earlier, however, he describes Miwok terminology as being ordered in part by a factor consisting of “the feeling that one brother may be substituted for another, or that brothers are essentially alike” (Gifford 1916:183). Except for its psychological implication, this is evidently the same principle that Radcliffe-Brown (who cites Gifford 1916, though not in this precise context) was later to call “the unity of the sibling group” (Radcliffe-Brown 1952:64–65).

10. Here, I use ideal type in the Weberian sense, and not to suggest that in such systems marriage with a person in the prescribed category is simply an ideal that one may or may not choose to follow.

11. Needham (1975) does refer to prescriptive systems in his article, “Polythetic Classification.” He claims, however, that prescriptive terminologies constitute a monothetic class (one all of whose members share common, definitive features) because “the anthropological taxon of prescriptive systems of social classification is so defined that the individual terminologies shall be distinctly alike.” He then contrasts these to “the class of ‘natural’ societies characterized by jural categories of this type,” which he says is polythetic (Needham 1975:361). Since it is clear that by “jural categories of this type” he means prescriptive terminologies, this polythetic class would not include the Miwok, nor for example the Mapuche. The point is underlined later (Needham 1975:366) where Needham describes prescriptive alliance systems as being defined monothetically. He mentions the Miwok once in this article (Needham 1975:360), but only in reference to Murdock’s (1949:240) list of societies possessing “Normal Omaha” terminology.

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