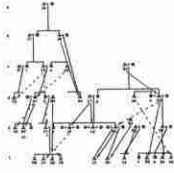


RETHINKING COUSIN MARRIAGE IN RURAL CHINA¹



Zhaoxiong Qin
Kobe City University of Foreign Studies

This article considers cousin marriage rules among affines in rural Chinese culture, based on research in Hubei Province. After close evaluation of some of the existing studies, it concludes that arguments based on the Lévi-Strauss model of generalized exchange have not proven to be satisfactory. A patrilineal perspective more adequately clarifies the reasons for the disapproval of FZD marriage and informs the basic principle underlying all patterns of cousin marriage. (Rural China, cousin marriage, patrilineal perspective, general exchange)

Studies during the last several decades have proposed different explanations of cousin marriage among Chinese, but none provides an accurate and comprehensive principle to explain the rules that guide the selection of marriage partners among relatives in rural Chinese society. This article offers a solution to this impasse in suggesting that the principles of Chinese kinship are grounded in patrilineal descent, which has a vital function in political and economic areas, as well as in ritual observances and other activities related to ancestor worship. Thus a study of patrilineal consanguinity offers a more solid basis than previous attempts for explaining comprehensively and accurately certain types of marriage among Chinese. Although much has been done concerning patterns of Chinese marriages, more in-depth studies of the Chinese kinship system are needed to fully explain them. This is attempted here by drawing on previous studies and incorporating my research.

COUSIN MARRIAGE AND CHINESE KINSHIP

For the Chinese, *qinqi* (affines) are relationships created through marriage, and are sharply distinguished from members of one's own lineage. In the kinship terminology, patrilateral parallel cousins are *tang* (FBS and FBD), but all patrilateral cross-cousins, matrilateral cross-cousins, and matrilateral parallel cousins are *biao* (remote) relatives for Ego, male or female.

Marriage within the lineage, especially FBD marriage, is treated like marriage between kin and tantamount to sibling marriage. Because this type of marriage is strictly forbidden, both in custom and in law, it does not need attention here.² But marriages between other types of first cousins are regarded quite differently. FZD, MBD, and MZD marriages for a male ego have usually been referred to as *biao* or *zhong-biao* (outside) marriages. Although the marriage rules that prevailed during the dynastic era of China's history generally tolerated such marriages (Li 1950:99-100), they have been prohibited for genetic reasons in both mainland China and Taiwan since the 1980s (Tao, Wang, and Ge 1988:313; Liang 1995:14). In practice, however, this type of marriage continues in a great many villages (Wu, Yang, and Wang 1990:330).

Previous research indicates considerable regional variation in attitudes and preferences related to biao marriages. For example, in both Kaixiangong Village in Jiangsu Province, where Fei (1939) did fieldwork, and Phoenix Village in Guangdong Province, which Kulp (1925) studied, MBD marriage was preferred and FZD marriage frowned upon (Fei 1939:50-51; Kulp 1925:168). According to Hsu (1945:91), the people of West Town in Yunnan Province favored MBD marriage, tolerated MZD marriage, but disapproved of FZD marriage. On the basis of his fieldwork and that of Fei and Kulp, Hsu (1945:100) makes the generalization that MBD marriage is preferred all over China, whereas in most regions FZD marriage is not. Lévi-Strauss (1969) and Leach (1961), relying heavily on the work of Hsu, place China in an "axis of generalized exchange" and the category of societies where MBD marriage is frequent (Lévi-Strauss 1969:351-58; Leach 1961:74-76). Most arguments have been based on the Lévi-Strauss model of generalized exchange of women through MBD marriage. As Suenari (1985:315) has commented, "If this cross-cousin marriage were always preferable, wives would always be received from the same group and the women in one's own patrilineal group would always be given to the same group; a fixed network would be established through exchange of women between patrilineal groups. This is Lévi-Strauss's hypothesis, but there is disagreement as to whether this pattern is applicable in China."

Cooper (1983:335) questions Lévi-Strauss's theory of generalized exchange and suggests some revision by taking account of Bourdieu's (1977) critique of structuralism and the practice of cousin marriage in Dongyang, Zhejiang Province. Cooper's (1993:777-78) data show that the villagers of Dongyang contract FZD marriage for the purpose of strengthening affinal ties, and so do some West Towners (Hsu and Hu 1945; Hsu 1945:94). Cooper's data bear out Bourdieu's strictures against classifying marriage contracted for a variety of purposes as a single type based solely on genealogical similarity. Following Bourdieu, Cooper seeks to avoid the pitfalls of reifying rules, and takes note of the diversity of motives that underlie apparently similar structural forms. He also finds useful Bourdieu's emphasis on the strategic considerations confronting kinship groups in deciding whether to reinforce ties to existing affines or diversify ties to new ones (Cooper 1993:759).

However, Cooper's theory cannot explain why the matrilineal form of marriage is more common than the patrilineal form and why FZD marriages are generally undesirable.³ In fact, he (Cooper 1993:759) comments that "the MZD is not distinguished conceptually from either cross-cousin (MBD or FZD), nor is either cross-cousin distinguished from the other." However, FZD is distinguished conceptually from the other types in my study, and is discussed below.

Controversy remains, however, as to whether among cousin marriages MBD marriage is preferred in every region of China. Freedman (1958:98-99), for example, contends that MBD marriage is not prevalent everywhere in China and certainly not in southeast China. Gallin (1963), based on his research in a Taiwanese village, considers that in China MZD marriage is not considered particularly problematic, and that MBD marriage is preferred over FZD marriage. Furthermore, MBD marriages

→ are not favored so much as simply permitted, and FZD marriages tend to meet with disapproval more often than with tolerance. Gallin (1963:108) suggests that in some regions MBD marriages may be actively preferred, but in general they are merely considered acceptable.

The same tendency appears in my fieldwork⁴ in the village of Lijiawan and in other parts of Hubei. Using studies by Thery and van der Valk, Freedman (1958:97) comments, "In some districts of this province [Hubei], it was apparently possible to marry all non-agnatic cousins. In other districts cousin marriage was restricted to the MBD and the MZD. From two or three counties it was reported that MBD marriage was practiced with the accompanying prohibition of marriage with the father's sister's daughter (FZD)." Other studies, including those by Fried (1953:64) in Anhui Province, Chigusa (1967:68) in Jilin Province, Oyama (1952:45) in northeast China, Cooper (1993:774) and Cooper and Zhang (1993) in Zhejiang Province, all indicate similar practices. In general, Chinese culture condemns FZD marriage but finds MBD and MZD marriages perfectly acceptable.

What underlying principle explains these different preferences for cousin marriage? Ueno's (1983:130) discussion of cousin marriage in Taiwan, which incorporates research by Gallin and others, points out,

Because of the general proscription on marriage between people with the same surname and also because of the legal prohibition, patrilateral parallel cousin marriage is not permitted; as for cross-cousin marriage, FZD marriage is not particularly welcomed, but MBD marriage is permitted. Since MZD marriage is understood as marriage between distantly related people, it is not met with strong disapproval. So far we have not obtained adequate explanations from members of village society with regard to the different assessments of these two types of cross-cousin marriage. A lot more work is needed to examine and analyze the way local people understand genetics and heredity, as well as the relative positions of wife-takers and wife-givers.

But Ueno made no special attempt to investigate the considerations underlying the assumption that MZD marriage is a union of distant relatives and therefore should not be subject to strong disapproval. As will be discussed below, considerable research has been done on FZD and MBD marriage, but without fully accounting for MZD marriage. The following discussion attempts to provide a principle that explains Chinese cousin marriage generally.

PREVIOUS EXPLANATIONS OF FZD MARRIAGE

Numerous arguments have been put forth attempting to explain why FZD marriage is proscribed, while MBD and MZD marriages ordinarily are permitted. Hsu (1945:97-99) reviews five interpretations of the taboo: 1) an inclination toward hypergamy; 2) an inclination to expand the circle of kinship; 3) the psychological relationship between mother and daughter associated with the disparity in their positions in the household; 4) folk wisdom about procreation concerning "return of bone and flesh"; and 5) the emotional and psychological relationship between bride and mother-in-law.

Hsu concludes that none of the five fully accounts for cousin marriage practices, but he is unable to explain why FZD marriage sometimes occurs. Nor does Cooper's (1993) discussion of Hsu's critique explain this. Examining their arguments helps to clarify analytical obstacles preventing the understanding of cousin marriage.

1) Regarding **hypergamy**, Hsu and Cooper agree that the bride's family being of lower standing than the groom's does not by itself account for the proscription of FZD marriage, since it is not unusual to find marriages in which the father's sisters marry into families of equal or slightly lower status (Hsu 1945:97; Cooper 1993:777).

2) The idea that the prohibition shrinks the circle of kin and reduces the number of relatives that may be of help does not hold (Hsu 1945:98), since MBD and MZD marriage have the same effect.

3) The suggestion that FZD marriage would produce undue **strain on the mother-daughter relationship** is also weak. Hsu (1945:98) points to the practice of second-cousin FZD marriage to challenge this argument. The difficulty with this argument is that it regards differences between mother's and daughter's positions in the household as literal reality, and consequently exaggerates status-related psychological tensions experienced by mother and daughter. Certainly a young wife in her husband's house has the least privileged position, in contrast to the privilege she enjoys in her parents' house, but lest we forget, no woman is destined to remain on the lowest rung in her husband's household. Neither can she expect to maintain her privileged position in her parents' home indefinitely. A newly married bride has virtually no prerogatives in the house of her husband, but as children, especially boys, are born and grow up, she eventually becomes a mother-in-law. Over the years she gradually acquires authority and an increasingly privileged standing in the household.

On the other hand, once her own parents die, the married daughter's standing in her parental home disappears. While her parents are alive, she continues her customary visits home, but ordinarily these visits do not last more than a few days—too short a time for status-related psychological tensions between mother and daughter to become serious enough to explain a taboo on FZD marriage. Furthermore, even if a woman's position in the household were considered to be fixed, "in China the extended family was not the general rule," as Fei (1985:293) points out. In the case of small or nuclear families, the married daughter might visit her parents periodically, but there would be almost no occasion when she and her mother-in-law would be living under the same roof, were she in a first- or second-cousin FZD marriage. In practical terms, the need to deal with such status-related psychological strains almost never arises.

4) The fourth argument derives from folk wisdom associated with procreation. **骨肉回歸** is encapsulated in the term **Gurou huigui (return of bone and flesh)**, which means that children are **born with bone (semen) from the father and flesh (menstrual blood) from the mother** and thus share much of their identity. From the bone-and-flesh perspective, as Hsu (1945:98) explains, "The father's sister by giving her own

daughter in marriage to her brother's son (FZD marriage) will have effected what virtually is her own permanent return to her parents' home. To be divorced and returned to her parents' home is what every traditional Chinese woman fears and the FZD-MBS type of mating carries this connotation and perhaps even an ominous forecast of the future."

Folk ideas of bone and flesh are widespread in north China. In the Harbin and Yanji area of the northeast, children are said to be born **inheriting male semen and female blood**, which means that the children of the father's sister have the same elements of semen and blood as their mother. Hence, if FZD mated with MBS, their semen and blood would take a course back toward the origin, and so they cannot marry. In the local idiom this is described as *xue tong dao liu* (reverse flow of blood) or *gu xue dao liu* (reverse bone and blood) (Chigusa 1967:68). Other studies conducted in villages, including Oyama (1952:44-46) in Shandong and Hebei, Uchida (1949:74-76) in Hebei, and Nakao (1992) in Shandong, report similar concepts and practice.

Hsu (1945:98) says, "The phrase 'bone and flesh' came from the lips of every one of my North China informants, but not frequently from natives of other provinces." However, recent observers say that the same term and idea are also used in other areas. Watson (1982:179, 1988:113), for example, presents the ideas of flesh (*yin*, female forces) and bone (*yang*, the male element) in the local view in Guangdong. In southern China, the concept of blood in procreation is also expressed. As Kulp (1925:168) reports, a boy inherits the blood of his father and a girl inherits the blood of her mother. For that reason, FZD marriage is prohibited. Similar ideas are found in Taiwan (Gallin 1963:107). Structurally, this is the same as the bone-and-flesh folk belief.

Arguments based on folk concepts about heredity are used to explain avoidance of FZD marriage, but they leave other types of cousin marriage unexplained. Hsu's (1945:99) opinion that the bone-and-flesh argument explains the proscription of FZD marriage fails to account for the positive desire for MBD marriage. Hsu bases his critique on his mistaken assumption that MBD marriage is preferred everywhere, which is not so. Thus the validity of this critique is undermined from the start.

Nakao's (1992:76-78) approach follows Hsu's, but uses a mathematical model to show that the offspring from FZD marriage have the same bone and flesh as do the offspring from brother-sister marriage. He concludes that because of the bone-and-flesh perspective on heredity, FZD marriage is perceived as being too much like sibling marriage, and is therefore prohibited. A bigger problem, however, is that the **bone-and-flesh or blood argument does not explain why so many Chinese perceive FZD marriage so differently from MZD marriage**. "The logic of Kulp's 'report' is somewhat flawed, because if a man's blood derives from his father and a woman's blood derives from her mother, then a sister and brother will not have the same blood. Hsu . . . fails to catch this difficulty" (Cooper 1993:775). In other words, if brother and sister have different blood, or different bone and flesh, FZD marriage

would be acceptable, as would brother-sister marriage. This logic is contradicted in practice.

There is a similar dilemma in the consideration of MZD marriage. If children are the product of male semen and female blood, the male ego's sisters and his MZD have inherited the same blood, so MZD marriage would be the same as brother-sister marriage. In theory, MZD marriage should be considered even closer to sibling marriage than FZD marriage and therefore prohibited. In practice, however, MZD marriage is regarded as completely different from FZD marriage and is not forbidden.

5) The last argument is Fei's (1939) approach: MBD marriage is more conducive to a good psychological and emotional relationship between bride and mother-in-law than FZD marriage. When MBD marry, if the bride and her mother-in-law are from the same household and the mother-in-law is also the bride's aunt, good relationships are easily established. In the case of FZD marriage, however, the bride and her mother-in-law are from different households, and the mother-in-law transfers to her new daughter-in-law the oppression she herself experienced at the hands of her own mother-in-law. Such a relationship tends to go badly, and the villagers dislike this type of marriage (Fei 1939:50-51).

But Hsu (1945:85) points out, "If better cooperation within the family home be the primary consideration, marriage of sons and daughters of two sisters will serve the same purpose." Yet this mode of mating of parallel cousins on the mother's side is nowhere encouraged, but merely tolerated. Fei's theory included no attempt to explain why FZD marriage is disliked even when the mother-in-law is absent or when the mother-in-law is kind and well-disposed to the bride (Uchida 1949:77-78). Also, Cooper (1993:776) says that Fei's and Hsu's argument "would seem to hold for repeated instances of FZD marriage but does not explain why an occasional individual instance of FZD marriage should be any more disruptive of family harmony than a marriage into an unrelated family, as the few data from Dongyang and Hsu's West Town would seem to confirm." In reality, the emotional and psychological relationship between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law varies so widely that it is difficult to see it as a premise or a condition for marriage, much less as a factor determining patterns of cousin marriage.

To recapitulate: Hsu presented five arguments to account for avoidance or proscription of FZD marriage, but a review of those arguments, and of Hsu's own critical observations, makes it clear that none of them can explain patterns of cousin marriage satisfactorily. Leach (1961:76) discussed Hsu's five arguments and noted that "the first three explanations are all essentially structural explanations . . . while the last two explanations are essentially psychological explanations." Leach was interested in a systematic account of marriage practices rather than psychological arguments based on relative social positions of individuals. But none of the structural arguments is adequate because their premises are not borne out in reality. Cooper also used the examples of FZD marriage and the social functions against Hsu, but without explaining the overall disapproval of FZD marriage. In every case, these

arguments were constructed to explain the effects rather than the origins of common practices. What is needed is not a set of interpretations to account for specific practices, but a basic principle that underlies all patterns of cousin marriage and explains why they occur.

THE PATRILINEAL PERSPECTIVE

Research in the village of Lijiawan in Hubei Province found attitudes toward various types of cousin marriage similar to those reported by Gallin and others. As of April 1998, Lijiawan had a population of 468 in 128 households. In this area, the saying, “*Yi dai qin, er dai biao; san dai si dai zou wan le*” (first generations have affinal relations, second generations are biao; in third or fourth generations the cousin relationship may be over) expresses the duration and scope of biao relatives. Among affinal relationships, MBD and MZD marriages are not particularly favored but are considered acceptable. The term *qin shang jia qin* (compounding affinal relationships with more ties by marriage) is sometimes used in describing these cousin marriages, but it does not connote approval; it signifies only that they are permissible. It is one way of choosing whom to marry, but not a goal or a strategy of reaffirmation of existing affinal ties for villagers. FZD marriage, furthermore, is not favored. The villagers consider it something to be avoided, as shown in the following statistics: between October 1949 and September 1993, 109 women came to the village from other areas as brides. Nine cases out of 109 marriages were cousin marriages, an incidence of 8.4 per cent. Five (4.6 per cent) of them were MBD to their husbands and three (2.8 per cent) were MZD. Only one was FZD.

This FZD was a girl with the surname Wang, who came as a bride from a village four kilometers away. In October 1979, she married a man with the surname Li, the second-oldest son of her own mother's brother. In due course, the couple gave birth to a boy and a girl. The boy was mentally retarded. The villagers attributed the boy's condition to his parents' marriage and used the case to condemn FZD marriage. There are no statistical records showing where women who married out of the village went, but most of the villagers interviewed said, “No bride sent off from this village went to marry the son of her mother's brother.” They asserted without exception that “such a marriage should be avoided.” These notions of kin relationships appear in other rural areas of China. Gallin (1963:107) found that the villagers think FZD marriage is almost incestuous and so close that the children born of the union are likely to be “stupid.” Wu (1990:328-30) asserts that most Chinese share these perceptions and this is one reason why they tend to disapprove of FZD marriage.

The villagers in my study gave several other explanations for disapproving of FZD marriages. One that is similar to Hsu's fourth argument concerns the relationship between parents and offspring that results in sharing the same blood. While only a few elders could state that bone is inherited from the father and flesh from the mother, others knew that bones symbolize yang (the male element) and that flesh symbolizes yin (the female element). A few elders also tried to explain the

reasons for the disapproval of FZD marriage using “return of bone and flesh,” but they could not explain why FZD should be avoided.

Still, the idea that *gongxue* (sharing the same blood) is wrong was proffered as an explanation for the proscription of a brother and sister marrying, as well as FZD or FBD marriage. Since brother and sister have the same parents and are born of the same mother’s body, they have the same blood and should not marry. In the same way that brothers and sisters should not marry, their children also should not marry, thus explaining why FZD marriage and tang cousin (FBD) marriage is discouraged.

But why are MBD and MZD marriages acceptable? MBD and MZD share the same blood, since MBD’s father and MZD’s mother are brother and sister. When asked, some villagers had no idea, but others answered:

For us, the matrilateral relatives are different from the patrilateral relatives. The blood relationships of patrilateral relatives are closer than [the blood relationships] of matrilateral relatives. A man and woman with the same blood or close blood relationship usually should not marry, because their offspring would not be good or normal and might be mentally retarded or physically handicapped. That is why we avoid the FZD marriage.

This second local explanation is revealing. The villagers’ views on marriage always focus on the father’s or male side, but not the mother’s or female side. Accordingly, the principle of lineage, particularly patrilineal kinship among the Chinese, appears to be extremely significant for understanding Chinese cousin marriage and offers a more encompassing and adequate explanation of the rules among affines governing such marriages. The possibility of marriage with relatives involves the question of whether a patrilineal blood relationship exists. The siblings of the mother are blood relations to her, but not to the father, which means that the female cousins on the mother’s side do not have the same patrilineal blood relationships and surname as Ego. In the case of MBD marriage, Ego calls his bride’s grandparents *Wai-zufumu* (outside grandparents), and their children also call their mother’s parents *Wai-zufumu*. From Ego’s standpoint, his bride is from a completely different lineage than his own and has absolutely no kin relationship to his father.

The same holds true in MZD marriages. As Ego has no patrilineal connection with his own mother, either MBD or MZD marriage is perfectly acceptable. The situation is different regarding the relationship between father’s sisters and Ego. Freedman (1958:32) points out that a woman’s surname does not change after marriage: “She retained her own surname through life and was ritually a part of her original family at least to the extent of mourning for her parents.” Watson (1982:179) adds, “In the Cantonese conception a woman’s bones are thought to be the products of an alien lineage, deriving (like her name) from her father.”

The actions of daughters-in-law are particularly instructive. As surname exogamy (and, hence, lineage exogamy) is strictly enforced in the New Territories region, these women are all “outsiders.” Outsider women, even aged wives, are never completely trusted in Chinese lineages (see Watson, 1975). Nonetheless, these women are the primary reproducers of lineage. The ambiguous position of Cantonese

Woman is demonstrated by her dual role as daughter and daughter-in-law. She plays a key part in the absorption of pollution at the funerals of her natal parents as well as her husband's parents. (Watson 1982:173-74)

Such customs imply that the father's sisters remain members of the father's lineage; furthermore, collateral relatives on the father's side, unlike maternal collateral relatives, remain close to the father's lineage and are a kind of extension of it.

This concept of the extension of patrilineal blood relationships differs from the concept of lineage. According to the principle of lineage, Ego should be able to marry his FZD because she belongs to a different lineage. In other words, she belongs to her father's lineage, not to her mother's or to Ego's. In fact, however, such a marriage is discouraged because great weight is given to patrilineal relationships, and FZD's mother is related by blood to Ego's father, so to marry FZD is similar to incest. Patrilineal consanguineous relationships are also patrilateral consanguineous relationships and include the father-son and father's collateral relatives' relationships. Because of the importance of the father-son relationship, the father's relatives are perceived as particularly close to the son. This extension of patrilineal blood relations to include patrilateral relatives extends the patrilineal descent principle to FZD.

Given this view of patrilateral blood relationships and the central place of the father-son relationship, it is understandable that not only members of the father's lineage but also his collateral relatives and their children are perceived as being very close to the son. They are "special beings" in his life. Thus, a daughter of the father's sister, even though she is not a member of the same lineage as Ego, is nonetheless a relative of Ego's father and can be considered to be closely related by blood to Ego's patrilineage. For that reason, FZD marriage is regarded as taking place between close relatives; i.e., members of the same lineage. For Ego, all of his father's nieces are considered blood related and therefore tabooed potential marriage partners. As noted earlier, many people believe that if such close kin marry, their children are likely to be mentally retarded or handicapped.

Thus, for a male, marriage with a blood relative on his father's side is prohibited, but marriage with a relative who has no blood relationship on his father's side is permitted. Seen from this perspective, we can understand why the FZD is said to have the same bloodline as the father, and were she to marry her mother's brother's son (Ego), the marriage would be described as "return of bone and blood." MBD and MZD marriage, however, even though she has the same bloodline as Ego's mother, would not be called "return of bone and blood" and would be permitted. The same reasoning explains why patrilateral parallel-cousin marriage is rigidly proscribed even while MZD marriage is permitted. The issue is whether a patrilateral blood relationship exists. Villagers consider sexual relations between tang cousins incestuous and rigidly oppose them. It is the same with relations between Ego and his FZD, although the prohibition is less strict.

The villagers I interviewed regard collateral relatives of the father differently from those of the mother and feel more closely related by blood to those in the

舅父，姨夫 ≠
姑夫

father's line. For example, all the *jiufu* (mother's brothers), *yifu* (mother's sisters' husbands), and *gufu* (the husbands of the father's sisters) are prominent, but since *jiufu* and *yifu* have a blood tie to the mother, they are "outsiders" whose visits to the home are greeted with considerable ceremony and more formal hospitality, which implies a more distant relationship. *Gufu*, even though they might seem equally outsiders, are thought of as like blood relatives or family members, and are treated more casually. Good manners require, for example, that a brother of the mother be seated in the place of honor at a dinner or banquet, while the father's brother-in-law is seated one place lower in rank.

Also, when a family is divided, the mother's brothers take on the crucial role of mediator. According to customary rules, in any division of family property among brothers, a *jiufu* is regarded as the most suitable person to make decisions for two reasons. First, he is considered to be an outsider relative, and therefore both special and neutral. Second, he can support his sister's sons because of the patrilineal principle (for the mother's brother, Ego is his sister's son, FZS).⁵ The mother's sister's husband cannot assume this role because he lacks the same extension of patrilineal relationship with Ego's mother. This arrangement stems from the perception that the sons' maternal uncles are not in the father's line but are special outsiders with blood ties to the mother. Having that distance, the maternal uncles are therefore qualified and expected to take a more neutral position toward the sons than would relatives connected to the sons on the father's side. This custom persists today in my field area.

Other evidence for the importance of the patrilineal blood relationship can be seen in the strength of the differing connections with paternal and maternal relatives. In my area of study, it is commonly observed that "*gu lao biao yi wu qin, yi lao biao wai xiang ren*" (cross-cousins on the father's side are part of the family, but parallel cousins on the mother's side are outsiders to males). This implies, accurately, that since a father's sisters' children are insiders, their relation as kin will usually continue even after the father's sisters die. But the children of a mother's sisters are considered outsiders, so when the mother's sisters die, the kin relationship with their children fades away. In summary, ordinarily relatives on the father's side are thought of as more important than those on the mother's, and the relationship and contact with the former tend to endure longer.

Patriliney also explains differences between MBD and MZD marriage. Among matrilineal relatives, daughters of Ego's mother's siblings share the mother's lineage, and they are all members of a lineage that is totally unrelated to Ego's. Since they are not blood-related kin on Ego's father's side, marriage to any of those daughters is not a problem. Even so, MBD and MZD each has a different relationship to Ego. A mother's brother's daughter belongs to the same patrilineal group of relatives as the mother, which is why MBD marriage involves a particularly close affinal relationship. MZD, however, belongs to another patrilineage that is so distant from Ego's mother's that families consider MZD marriage, unlike MBD marriage, to be the same thing as marriage between unrelated people.

姑老表已
無親，
姨老表外
相人？

Usually Ego feels more emotional warmth and support from his matrilineal relatives than from his patrilineal relatives, and more so from his jiufu than from his gufu and yifu. Because he feels closer to his jiufu, he may feel more drawn to marry his jiufu's daughter (MBD) rather than his yifu's daughter (MZD). This may be an additional reason why MBD marriage is more common than MZD marriage.

The above analysis makes it clear that villagers in rural Hubei understand two different categories of kin relations: collateral kin on the father's side and collateral kin on the mother's side. We have also seen how fundamentally the configuration of relationships among relatives can change, depending on how patrilineal blood relationships are understood. This point is crucial to understanding the special nature of affinal relations. Patrilineal relatives are perceived as more closely related because of the patrilineal blood relationship that exists between Ego and his father's sisters. Thus FZD marriage is discouraged, but because Ego does not have the same kind of patrilineal blood relationship with his mother's collateral relatives, MBD and MZD marriage are permitted. A similar analysis also explains the differences between MBD and MZD marriage.

Regarding the strong tendency to place greater importance on patrilineal ties than matrilineal, Nakao (1990:129) reports a saying from northern China: "*Gu biao qin* 姑表親 *shi bei bei qin, yi biao qin shi yi si le duan le gen*" (aunts on the father's side are 姨表親 forever relatives, but when aunts on the mother's side die, kin ties die with them). Other research reports document the important role played by the mother's brother at the time of dividing family property. Fei (1985:47) in east China, Freedman (1958:104) in south China, Lin (1947:123) in the southeast, Nakao (1990:108) in north China, Oyama (1952:45) in the northeast, Wolf (1972:34) in Taiwan, and so on. Furthermore, researchers in southeast China (Lin 1947:114-15) and Taiwan (Gallin 1960:639) have observed that when a father's sister's son gets married, the guest of honor is the groom's oldest maternal uncle. Researchers have also noted how order or rank can affect rules of intermarriage among kin in north China (Uchida 1949:82). This extremely important norm, the principle of generational order in Chinese families and lineages, "is derived from the concept of generations in the lineage, that is, the patrilineal descent group" (Nakao 1991:267). The most significant element, however, is the father-son relationship that forms the core of the concept. Patrilineal consanguineous relations clearly determine the forms of cousin marriage. In other words, cousin marriage rules derive from the strength of patrilineal descent rather than from any other explanation.

CONCLUSION

Apart from some discussions focusing on psychological and other factors, most studies of Chinese cousin marriage have used a Lévi-Strauss model to explain the patterns. But as both Freedman and Leach have observed, MBD marriage is not practiced preferentially among Chinese families everywhere, and "there is no evidence that Chinese local descent groups ever intermarry systematically and

asymmetrically on a regular 'wife-giving/wife-receiving' basis" (Leach 1961:54). Cooper (1993:779) also "retains a structuralist approach revised in line with the caveats of practical action theory" to discuss why someone would choose FZD marriage. But his theory cannot explain the differences among the patterns of cousin marriage and particularly why the matrilineal form is more common than the patrilineal. In other words, it is not enough to clarify the mechanisms and principles of marriage rules among affines in Chinese kinship.

Furthermore, the general exchange model does not provide a single comprehensive explanation that accounts for all forms of cousin marriage in China. I suggest that Chinese kinship is not part of a basic core structure in which MBD marriage plays a large role. It is, rather, part of a complex structure at which Lévi-Strauss only hinted. For this reason, studying Chinese kinship requires taking a new approach, which this article has tried to do. We can account for all the forms and patterns of marriage between people related by kinship ties by examining such marriages from a patrilineal perspective. The patrilineal relationship is the principle that underlies the structure of Chinese marriage and all the various types of cousin marriage.

NOTES

1. The first version of this article, in Japanese, was published in 1999 as "Marriage Rules among Affines and Agnates" in *Center and Periphery in China: Views from Anthropological Fieldwork*, ed. Michio Suenari, pp. 19-39. This version is heavily revised and edited. I added to and developed my analyses using the studies of several other anthropologists, such as Eugene Cooper. I owe special thanks to James Watson, Martin Whyte, and the reviewers of *Ethnology* for their helpful comments on this revision.
2. In recent decades, many localities have lifted the taboos against same-surname and -lineage marriage (Chan, Madsen, and Unger 1984). The patrilineal connections in these marriages, however, are very distant. The taboo against FBD marriage persists and extends to the fifth generation because marriage between members of any generation in the *wufu* (the sphere of mourning for the dead includes five generations) is similar to incest.
3. Cooper (1993:779) presents a total of sixteen out of 300 cases: ten MBD, three FZD, and one MZD marriage and two substitute (FBWBD and FMBSD) in three villages (1993:760). "The 16 cases of cousin marriage discovered among these 300 had occurred almost exclusively before 1949 or very shortly thereafter, suggesting an incidence of between 5 and 10 percent for cousin marriage among the marriages recorded in the communities" (1993:779). In other words, neither form of cousin marriage is common. This small percentage is not enough to support his explanation, but it supports my own data (around 8.4 per cent). For villagers, FZD marriage is one way of choosing a marriage partner, but is not a goal or strategy for reaffirming existing affinal ties.
4. A total of six months' field research was carried out between February 1989 and September 1993. I thank the Toyota Foundation for financial support. All names of people and villages have been changed to protect their identities.
5. However, discussions of forms of marriage by cousins with patrilineal blood ties, as discussed here, are all made from the standpoint of a male ego. If we were to proceed from the viewpoint of a female ego, FZD marriage would mean marrying a mother's brother's son who, together with his parents, is not her patrilineal relative. Conversely, in a MBD marriage, a female ego would marry the son of her father's sister, and his mother would be her own patrilineal blood relative. From the female point of view, therefore, a MBD marriage would bring her to her own father's line. It would seem that such a

marriage would be prohibited, but local people who discussed this question with me said that apart from the connection through patrilineal relationships, male and female present different cases.

That is, in a patrilineal connection the most important link is the father-son relation. Hence a father's kin are not as important to his daughter as they are to a son. For a male ego, therefore, MBD marriage is not a problem. FZD marriage also should pose no problem for a female ego, but in reality it is prohibited because the bride is a relative of the groom's father. Thus, there is a definite, fundamental discrepancy in the way a man's kin relations and a woman's kin relations are perceived.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chan, A., R. Madsen, and J. Unger. 1984. *Chen Village: The Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China*. Berkeley.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge.
- Chigusa, T. 1967. *Manshu kazoku seido no kanshu (Customary Practices in the Family System in Manchuria)*. Tokyo.
- Cooper, E. 1983. Ten Section Systems, Omaha Kinship and Dispersed Alliance among the Ancient Chinese. *Current Anthropology* 24:3.
- . 1993. Cousin Marriage in Rural China: More and Less than Generalized Exchange. *American Ethnologist* 20(4):758-80.
- Cooper, E., and M. Zhang. 1993. Patterns of Cousin Marriage in Rural Zhejiang and in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. *Journal of Asian Studies* 52(1):90-106.
- Fei, X. 1939. *Peasant Life in China*. London.
- . 1985. *Seiiku Seido (Institutions for Reproduction)*, transl. H. Yokoyama. Tokyo.
- Freedman, M. 1958. *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China*. London.
- Fried, M. 1953. *Fabric of Chinese Society*. New York.
- Gallin, B. 1960. Matrilateral and Affinal Relationships of a Taiwanese Village. *American Anthropologist* 62(4):632-42.
- . 1963. Cousin Marriage in China. *Ethnology* 2(1):104-08.
- Hsu, F. L. K. 1945. Observation on Cross-Cousin Marriage in China. *American Anthropologist* 47(1):83-103.
- Hsu, F. L. K., and J. H. Hu. 1945. Guild and Kinship among the Butchers in West Town. *American Sociological Review* 10(3):357-64.
- Kulp, D. H. 1925. *Country Life in South China*. New York.
- Leach, E. R. 1961. *Rethinking Anthropology*. London.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1969 (1949). *The Elementary Structure of Kinship*, transl. J. H. Bell and J. R. von Sturmer. Boston.
- Li, Z. 1950. *Zhongbiaohun de Lishi Guan (Historical Perspective on Cousin Marriages)*. *Hunyin Wenti Cankao ziliao Huibian (Reference Materials on Marriage Problems)*, ed. Central Government Committee on Law, pp. 99-102. Beijing.
- Liang, S. 1995. *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Hunyinfa Zhushi (Notes on the Marriage Laws of the People's Republic of China)*. Beijing.
- Lin, Y. 1947. *The Golden Wing: A Sociological Study of Chinese Family*. London.
- Nakao, K. 1990. *Chugoku sonraku no kenryoku kozo to shakai henka (Political Structure and Social Change in Chinese Villages)*. Tokyo.
- . 1991. *Shinzoku meisho no kakuchō to chien kankei: Kahoku no sedai ranku (Extension of Kinship Terms and Geographic Relationships: Generation Ranking in North China)*. *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 56(3):265-81.
- . 1992. *Kanzoku no minzoku seishokukan to itokokon (Han Chinese Folk Ideas on Procreation and Cousin Marriage)*. *Shien. Bulletin of Rikkyō University, Department of History* 52(2):71-86.

- Oyama, H. 1952. *Chugokujin no kazoku seido no kenkyu* (Studies on the Chinese Family System). Tokyo.
- Suenari, M. 1985. *Shakai ketsugo no tokushitsu* (The Characteristics of Social Cohesion). *Han minzoku to Chugoku shakai* (Han Ethnic Group and Chinese Society), ed. H. Mantaro, pp. 267-323. Tokyo.
- Tao, B., Z. Wang, and K. Ge (eds.). 1988. *Zuxin Zonghe Liufa Quanshu* (Newest Complete Compendium on Civil Law). Taipei.
- Uchida, T. 1949. *Chugoku noson ni okeru kekkon to sedai no mondai* (Issues of Marriage and Generation in Rural China). Vol. 1: *Doshisha hogaku*, no. 1. Kyoto.
- Ueno, H. 1983. *Taiwan Kanjin shakai ni okeru hahagata shinzoku oyobi inseki kankei ni kansuru shomondai* (Issues Concerning Matrilateral Relatives and Affinal Relationships in Taiwan's Han Chinese Society). *Meiji University Graduate Studies Bulletin* 20(3):127-40.
- Watson, J. 1975. *Agnates and Outsiders: Adoption in a Chinese Lineage*. *Man* 10:293-306.
- . 1982. *Of Flesh and Bones: The Management of Death Pollution in Cantonese Society*. *Death and the Regeneration of Life*, eds. M. Bloch and J. Parry, pp. 155-86. Cambridge.
- . 1988. *Funeral Specialists in Cantonese Society: Pollution, Performance, and Social Hierarchy*. *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, eds. J. L. Watson and E. S. Rawski, pp. 109-34. Berkeley.
- Wolf, M. 1972. *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan*. Stanford.
- Wu, C., D. Yang, and D. Wang. 1990. *Dandai Zhongguo Hunyin Jiatian Wenti* (Issues of and Family in Contemporary China). Beijing.