

later that the integrative potential of this custom was discerned. Suzuki (1959: 97), writing within a tradition of Leiden structuralism which posited an ancient Indonesian system of circulating connubium and socio-cosmic dualism, attempted to place Nias within this ur-system. Subsequent accounts of south Nias kinship have generally agreed that asymmetric connubium based on cross-cousin marriage is or was present in some form. However, the evidence is open to another interpretation. No prescriptive terminology has been reported from anywhere in Nias. There is no doubt that a marriage rule, of a jural not a categorical kind, exists in south Nias, but this is not, I suggest, the governing feature of asymmetric alliance in this instance. As I will show, matrilineal cross-cousin marriage is supplementary rather than necessary to asymmetric alliance in Nias. The question then becomes: Why is there such a rule in south Nias and not in the rest of the island? Before attempting to answer this question, let us review the evidence.

5. Is There Asymmetric Connubium in South Nias?

Suzuki (1959: 97) presents a case for circulating connubium among whole clans (without bringing in the question of prescription). His source, Schröder (1917: 331), mentions without further clarification "the regulated intermarrying of stipulated clans" within an *ōri* (district federation). This is Schröder's translation of *fahälö*, which means no more than "intermarry" (cf. Steinhart 1934: 357). Marschall (1976: 129) provides a conventional diagram of MBD marriage in a hypothetical system of circulating connubium among four clans of Maenamölö district. However, as Marschall points out, this does not represent the actual pattern of marriages; rather, it shows what would result if the MBD rule were consistently followed – a crucial point missed by some later authors who write as if the clan circle were an established fact. Scarduelli carries doubts about the connubial model a little further and argues that such marriage "circles" are "fictive" – though precisely whose fictions are involved is not made clear (1985: 98 f., 109). He argues that alliances are not repeated from generation to generation; chiefs prefer to diversify their political alliances.² Weighing these consider-

ations, I suggest we abandon the connubial model altogether as unhelpful to the Nias case.

It appears, from all the available information, that a lineage is involved in a number of different alliance chains, and no single clan cycle can be postulated. Indeed, brothers may marry into different clans; and the bridewealth schedules imply more groups in an alliance chain than there are clans in Maenamölö. That the MBD rule has the well-known structural entailments is of no relevance to the Nias case if these entailments are not recognized or applied or otherwise conceived by the people themselves (e.g., in a prescriptive terminology).

There are other factors which oppose marriage in a circle. Throughout Nias, it is a rule of thumb that one may not marry a woman for whom one can expect to receive a portion of bridewealth. I heard this formula expressed in various forms in central and south Nias, and it is repeated in a report from as far away as the Batu Islands, which were colonized from the south (Oerlemans 1935: 43). This rule, which implies a unilateral transfer of bridewealth, thus prohibits the return of a woman to a wife-giving group. Moreover, it makes the notion of a short cycle of alliance groups (i.e., closure) unacceptable, though "circles" at clan level may occur.³

To see how this prohibition is conceived let us look briefly at the division of bridewealth, which identifies the affinal groups clearly (see fig.). Bridewealth recipients are basically the same – though with less classificatory spread – as in the centre. In the foreground is the bride's father, *saduono*, and his patriline. Next come the bride's mother's brother (*sibaya*) *sifelezara*, and his patriline, followed by his mother's brother, (*sibaya*) *si'önö*, and so on. Bridewealth recipients form a series of wife-givers – the bride's line of maternal affiliation.⁴ It appears that the number of allied groups recognized varies with status (as in central Nias) and according to local custom.

to other first cousins. A rule enjoining marriage to MBD, sanctioned by a fine, is reported from the Batu Islands, whose social organization is similar to that of south Nias (Steinhart 1934: 359 note 31).

2 Scarduelli's diagram of linked connubial circles (1985: 104) reintroduces the same model for a different purpose: as a solution to the problems of inter-class marriage, resembling Leach's model of Kachin hypogamy (1961: 86). Its relevance to a non-prescriptive system is certainly questionable.

3 A closed cycle may occur at clan level since the asymmetric prohibition (and the distribution of bridewealth, which is the other side of the coin) operates at a lower structural level and concerns wife-takers as *individuals* not groups (Beatty 1990: 460). For the same reason, at the global level a de facto symmetric exchange may occur between clans.

4 Analogous to the *sanema maso-maso*, *hië dödö*, and *tahövu* in central Nias (cf. Beatty 1990: 456). These terms designate bridewealth recipients; they are not relationship terms.