

still living in his or her mother's tent, thus requiring a transition to an "adult" version from a male when he leaves the tent. Nicolaisen's original schemata give a clearer basis for discussion than Casajus's, for which one is obliged to reconstruct similar diagrams for comparison. The weakness of the author's presentation of data separately according to individualised male or female ego is that reciprocal relationships, particularly those between relations of different sexes, are not taken into account; an artificial division is introduced into the complete system as it is used in reality. The observation that the stated marriage preference does not correspond to its observed frequency leads him to examine the Kel Ferwan's own criteria, with the conclusion that in that context it does represent the optimum choice; he avoids discussion of patrilineage and matrilineage as not recognised by his subjects.

This concern for their own point of view is not so easily recognised in the subsequent examination of social behaviour, admirably wide-ranging though it may be. The structural elegance of the interpretations offered includes occasional references to legend, but it seems that an assumption that the polarities are not perceived by the Tuareg precludes any corroboration by reference to their own explanations. One is frequently left wondering what they do think. Thus their observation, as cited, that the north-south orientation of the tent for marriage is the same as that of a tomb is taken as the basis of an equation of marriage with death for the bridegroom, but two other associations cited in support of this are questionable: the application of henna to the hands and feet of bride and bridegroom and of corpses is, in general Islamic practice, derived from the view that both are a form of sacrifice, and the proverbial coupling of a marriage in this world with that in the next, *elakhrät*, refers not so much to death as life after death ("in earth as it is in heaven"). If the Tuareg really do make this parallel, then one needs more evidence of an attitude outside the usual Muslim terms of reference. Such instances of particularisation from the general Muslim tradition to serve local structural interests recur, leading one to question the validity of equations some of whose components have a much wider, but unmentioned relevance (as for example the symmetries listed on p. 300). Furthermore the deliberately cumulative construction of the book leads the author to recall earlier, tentative conclusions to serve in a later, more elaborated structure where their tentative nature is forgotten: in the German phrase, he sometimes discovers Easter eggs that he himself has hidden. His concern for symmetries, furthermore, is almost mathematical, and sometimes seems driven beyond a relationship to reality.

There are aspects of that reality about which we are left tantalisingly uninformed. Could not the mythical accounts of Tuareg origins have been compared with a summary of present ethno-historical findings? Could no theological view be adduced for the idea of the *kel esuf* in relation to Muslim doctrines of salvation through obedience, and paradise? It is plain that comment on the *kel esuf* was hard to obtain, but they form one pole of the book, and even a record of a negative response would have been preferable to no explanation at all. Possibly the author's vagueness here reflects that of the Tuareg themselves, but it leaves a curiously romantic shadow behind so many precise structures, reaching to the very end.

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