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HAROLD W. SCHEFFLER

Professor of Anthropology, Yale University

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

London New York Melbourne

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521219068

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First published 1978
This digitally printed version 2007

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Scheffler, Harold W.
Australian kin classification.

(Cambridge studies in social anthropology; no. 23)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Australian aborigines – Social life and customs.
 2. Kinship – Australia. 3. Kinship – Terminology.
- I. Title.

GN666.S33 301.42'1'0994 77–78391

ISBN 978-0-521-21906-8 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-04052-5 paperback

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PREFACE

This book is an attempt to demonstrate that the categories by which the aboriginal peoples of Australia order their social lives are predominantly kin categories - a moot point in social anthropology - and, beyond this, to reveal the structures and the relations among the structures of Australian systems of kin classification. The project is, in a way, a continuation of one initiated by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown in 1910 and to which he devoted much of his professional attention for many years thereafter.

Radcliffe-Brown aspired to demonstrate, as he said in 1951, that all Australian "kinship and marriage systems" are "varieties of one general type." Although his language was taxonomic, his vision was more in keeping with the contemporary structuralist program which, in the area of kinship studies, may be described as an attempt to isolate a set of elementary structures of which, in varying combinations, all kinship systems are constructed, and to order the empirical diversity

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among these systems by showing how any one may be derived from any other by certain rules of transformation or permutation. I will argue that Radcliffe-Brown did not accomplish what he set out to do, largely because of certain misconceptions about the structural principles he supposed all Australian kinship systems have in common, and because he (like so many other anthropologists before and after) fell into the methodological trap of confounding structural semantic and sociological accounts of systems of kin classification. By avoiding this methodological error, I hope to provide a superior account of the structures and the relations among the structures of Australian systems of kin classification, and thereby not only to set the stage for more adequate sociological accounts of them, but also to improve our understanding of the structures of Australian societies.

It is not, I think, merely an accident that Radcliffe-Brown chose to devote so much attention to Australian societies. When he began his project Australia was generally regarded as the refuge of the most archaic forms of human society, and many scholars argued forcefully, if not compellingly, that these forms are not based in concepts of genealogical connection and, therefore, have nothing in common with "kinship" as we and many other peoples know it. The comparability of these forms to social structures elsewhere in the world was therefore very much a matter

of speculation and dispute. For a number of good reasons, Radcliffe-Brown supposed that systems of ordering social relationships by reference to genealogical relationships among individuals, that is to say "kinship systems," occur in all human societies and are especially prominent in the institutions of so-called primitive or tribal societies. It was therefore a major challenge to him to show that although the kinship institutions of Australian societies may be somewhat unusual in comparative perspective, they are nevertheless kinship institutions, and, moreover, they exhibit structural continuities with the kinship institutions of other peoples.

Although Radcliffe-Brown's interpretation of the Australian data is rejected by many anthropologists, so are the competing interpretations. The very nature of Australian social institutions and of their comparability to the institutions of other peoples is still very much in dispute. For anyone who believes, as I do, that kinship systems are a constant feature of human societies, the challenge of the Australian data still remains.

It might be thought that one of the reasons why the major theoretical issues have not been resolved is lack of adequate data, and perhaps additional research in the field is required. Without wishing to minimize the potential value of additional field research, I would argue that, to the contrary, perhaps the principal

difficulty has been the use by anthropologists, either explicitly or implicitly, of inadequate and misleading lexical-semantic theory - in the light of which certain critical linguistic facts (although perhaps noticed and reported) have not been seen as especially relevant and have therefore not been taken sufficiently into account in theoretical arguments. In the light of more adequate lexical-semantic theory, the available data for at least some Australian languages are, I believe, reasonably adequate to permit us to reject some of the competing interpretations and to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that concepts of kinship and systems of kin classification are central and universal features of Australian social structure. These data, moreover, provide a reasonably secure foundation on which to construct models of the structures and the relations among the structures of Australian systems of kin classification. I do not suppose that, in all their aspects, the models presented herein will withstand critical evaluation and will not need to be revised in the light of further ethnographic and linguistic research. I will be pleased if ethnographers and linguists engaged in research in Australia are stimulated by my efforts to improve upon them by improving the quantity and quality of the relevant data and to suggest modifications, where necessary, to the models presented herein.

The lexical-semantic theoretical concepts and methods of structural semantic analysis that inform

this study have been explicated elsewhere, both in earlier studies by the same author (see especially Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971), and in numerous works on lexical semantics by other authors, some of which are noted in the References. However, the most immediately relevant concepts and methods are explained as they are introduced in the text and bibliographic references are provided to sources where they are again explained and their applications in other cases are illustrated.

For the benefit of those who advocate truth in packaging, I may add that the title of this study has been chosen with care. I have not attempted to provide anything like a definitive account of all the meanings of any Australian kinship term or set of terms, or of the relations among all those meanings. What I have attempted is to provide formally adequate accounts of the kin-class significata of certain Australian language expressions and of the relations among those significata. I am aware that many of these expressions have yet other kinds of meanings and are usable in ways other than to designate kin classes or members of kin classes. There are, however, at least two reasons why these other meanings need not be taken into account in this study, either in the specifications of the definitions of the kin classes or in the process of specifying those definitions. One of the reasons is that they are different kinds of meanings, whose specifications

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are not genealogical. The other reason is that the other kinds of meanings are structurally dependent on the kin-class significata. These structurally dependent meanings are specifiable only in terms of or by reference to the structurally central meanings. Therefore, adequate comprehension of the structurally dependent meanings must wait upon adequate comprehension of the structurally central meanings. But more of this in Chapter 1.

NOTATION

The various orthographic and notational conventions employed in the text and tables are as follows. Australian language expressions are represented orthographically as they are in the sources from which the data have been taken, although it is probable that in many instances these representations are not phonologically, much less phonemically, accurate. This has the obvious advantage of making it easier for the reader to refer back to the original sources, should he or she wish to do so. Moreover, the inaccuracies present few problems, because the present focus is on meaning rather than on form, and because the few problems presented by apparently inaccurate orthographic representations are readily resolvable. English glosses for Australian language expressions appear in single quotes, for example, 'sister' for an Australian expression whose structurally primary genealogical designatum is

the same as that of English sister. Where, as often happens, there is no appropriate simple English expression to use as a gloss, or where using a simple English expression might prove confusing, more complex English expressions are introduced, also in single quotes. Many Australian kinship terms designate two or more related kin classes, one included in the other. Where the reference is to the more inclusive class (sometimes described as the widened or expanded class), the Australian expression or its English gloss is represented in upper case letters, for example, SISTER for the full genealogical range of an Australian expression glossed as 'sister'.

Kintypes, or various kinds of genealogical relationships, are represented by single or juxtaposed upper case initials, often those of English kinship terms. Thus,

F = father	S = son	B = brother	H = husband
M = mother	D = daughter	Z = sister	W = wife
P = parent	C = child	Sb = sibling	Sp = spouse

Therefore, MB is to be read as "mother's brother," MZ as "mother's sister," and MBS as "mother's brother's son."

The letters (m) and (w) are used for man and woman respectively, to designate either ego or one of his or her kinsmen or kinswomen, and in each case specify the sex of the party designated by the symbol. In the text and in the various tables listing the kintype denotata

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of Australian kinship terms, these symbols are sometimes prefixed to kintype notations. In these contexts they serve only to indicate the sex of ego who so employs the terms in question. Where a kintype notation occurs in the text or tables without such a prefix, it may be understood that the sex of ego is immaterial, unless the sex of ego is otherwise indicated, for example, "a man's MBD," "a woman's FZS." Thus, in the text and in the tables, these symbols may be read as follows:

mMBS = male ego's mother's brother's son

wMBS = female ego's mother's brother's son

MBS = any person's (male or female ego's)
 mother's brother's son.

In contrast, in the equivalence rule formulas (m) and (w) are used more broadly to designate either the sex of ego or that of his or her kinsman or linking kinsman to whom the rule applies. Therefore, unless interpretation of the symbols is otherwise restricted (as noted below), the (m) may be read (in the equivalence rule formulas) as "male ego, or any male relative of ego or of any relative of ego," and the (w) may be read as "female ego, or any female relative of ego or of any relative of ego." But in these formulas it is often necessary to distinguish specifically nonterminal positions in the genealogical chains (i.e., a linking kinsman). A single dot (.) and a sequence of three dots (...) are used for these purposes. A single dot preceding a male or female sign means this sign must

be interpreted as ego and precludes any other interpretation. A sequence of three dots before a male or female sign means this sign must not be interpreted as ego, but must be interpreted as a linking kinsman of the appropriate sex but of unspecified genealogical position. A single dot following a kintype abbreviation means that the given abbreviation must be understood as referring to the designated relative only. Three dots following a kintype abbreviation mean that the given abbreviation cannot be interpreted as referring to the designated relative, but must be interpreted as a linking relative. Contrast the following when they occur in the equivalence rule formulas:

- MB = anyone's mother's brother
- mMB = any man's mother's brother
- .mMB = male ego's mother's brother
- .mMB. = male ego's mother's brother as a
designated relative
- MB... = anyone's mother's brother as a link to
some more distant relative
- mMB... = any man's mother's brother as a link to
some more distant relative
- ...mMB = a male linking relative's mother's
brother
- .mMB... = male ego's mother's brother as a link
to some more distant relative.

In componential definitions of kin classes, the single dot (.) represents the relationship of class

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intersection and may be read as "and"; (v) represents the relationship of class union and may be read as "or"; (σ[♂]) represents male, and (σ[♀]) represents female. The tilde (~) represents negation and may be read as "not." In the equivalence rule formulas, the equal sign (=) serves to link the two parts of a rule which are the simple reciprocal corollaries of one another; the sign may be read as "and conversely."

The locations of the various linguistic or "tribal" groups mentioned in the text are shown on Map 1.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research on which this study is based was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation (GS 28091) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and by a Research Fellowship in Social Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, in 1971-72.

Numerous colleagues have assisted in many ways. I am especially grateful to Emeritus Professor A. P. Elkin, University of Sydney, who generously permitted me to consult and to cite from his unpublished field reports. Professor A. L. Epstein, then Head of the Department of Anthropology, The Australian National University, arranged the Research Fellowship. Louise Hercus, John von Sturmer, and Nicolas Peterson made it possible for me to meet and work with many excellent aboriginal informants in South Australia, Queensland,

and the Northern Territory. Members of the staffs of several libraries and museums were generous with their time, knowledge, and facilities. Portions of this study were presented in seminars at Monash University, the University of Sydney, and The Australian National University, where I received many useful comments. Jeremy Beckett, Les Hiatt, Annette Hamilton, Dianne Barwick, Michael Allen, and W. E. H. Stanner were all helpful in many ways, as were Barbara Sayers, Mrs. D. F. Thomson, and Miss Judith Wiseman.

In the United States I received assistance from Lauriston Sharp, Mervyn Meggitt, Kenneth Hale, Nancy Munn, Warren Shapiro, Bruce Rigsby, and Floyd Lounsbury, and Michael Silverstein. Portions of this study were presented in seminars at Yale University, the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, and the University of New Mexico, where again I received many useful comments.

I am especially indebted to Susan Bean, Jimmy Holston, and the two anonymous professional reviewers for the Cambridge University Press, all of whom read the manuscript carefully and sympathetically and made many useful comments on how it might be improved.

Elizabeth Kyburg and Robin Wrzosek did their usual excellent work in typing the difficult manuscript.

My Australian informants included Peret Arkwookerum (Wik Ngantjera), Mick McLean (Wongkunguru, Southern

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-04052-5 - Australian Kin Classification
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Aranda), his wife Kathleen McLean (Arabana), Arthur McLean (Arabana), Leslie Russel and Johnny Reis (Wongkunguru), Ben Murray (Dieri), Angus and Eileen McKenzie and May Wilton (Adjamathanha), Sammy Johnson and Tommy Low (Walbiri) and Bob Holroyd (Thayorre). It was a great pleasure to work with all these people and to learn from them.

H.W.S.

