

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10619-1 - The Gift of Kinship: Structure and Practice in Maring Social Organization

Edward LiPuma

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## The gift of kinship

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10619-1 - The Gift of Kinship: Structure and Practice in Maring Social Organization

Edward LiPuma

Frontmatter

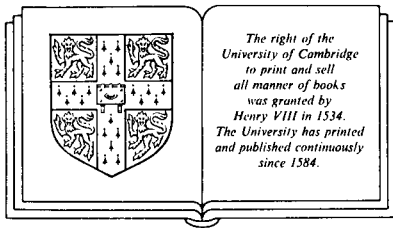
[More information](#)

# The gift of kinship

*Structure and practice in Maring social organization*

Edward LiPuma

*Department of Anthropology, University of Miami*



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

New York New Rochelle

Melbourne Sydney

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10619-1 - The Gift of Kinship: Structure and Practice in Maring Social Organization  
Edward LiPuma

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

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](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521106191](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521106191)

© Cambridge University Press 1988

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1988

This digitally printed version 2009

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

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

LiPuma, Edward, 1951–

The gift of kinship.

Bibliography.

Includes index.

1. Maring (New Guinea people)

2. Social structure – Papua New Guinea.

I. Title.

DU740.42.L57 1988 306'.0995'3 87–20883

ISBN 978-0-521-34483-8 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-10619-1 paperback

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10619-1 - The Gift of Kinship: Structure and Practice in Maring Social Organization

Edward LiPuma

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

List of figures, maps, and tables	<i>vii</i>
Preface	<i>ix</i>
Introduction	<i>1</i>
1 The ethnographic context	<i>14</i>
2 Substance and social exchange	<i>35</i>
3 The natural cycle: food, land, and substance	<i>62</i>
4 The structures of clanship	<i>108</i>
5 Marriage exchange	<i>148</i>
6 The making of the local group	<i>196</i>
7 From ethnography to theory	<i>219</i>
Glossary	<i>229</i>
References	<i>234</i>
Index	<i>239</i>

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10619-1 - The Gift of Kinship: Structure and Practice in Maring Social Organization

Edward LiPuma

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Illustrations

### *Figures*

- 1 Primary social oppositions 6
- 2 The cultural construction of the natural reproductive cycle 7
- 3 Relationships stemming from male and female ties 47
- 4 Bloodlines stemming from the marriage of two sisters into different partriclans 48
- 5 Male/female complementarity 51
- 6 Ancestral exchange 52
- 7 Marriage exchange 57
- 8 Relationship between modes of exchange 58
- 9 The transformation of taro 82
- 10 Vegetative propagation as a model of clan growth 98
- 11 Main co-substance relations 100
- 12 Patterns of alliance and enmity 110
- 13 A model of ascent 111
- 14 Lateral relationships 123
- 15 Semiotic structure of ritual 128
- 16 Sociocentric terms 129
- 17 Brother and sister terms on the cognatic level 131
- 18 Linguistic negotiation of exchange 133
- 19 Reaffiliation: stage I 135
- 20 Reaffiliation: stage II 136
- 21 Reaffiliation: stage III 137
- 22 Transfer of inter-clan land rights 153
- 23 Co-substance relations 158
- 24 Bloodlines – exchange 164
- 25 Compensation payments for Maring male received from and given to affines 178
- 26 Compensation payments made on death of a Maring male 179
- 27 Bloodlines 190

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10619-1 - The Gift of Kinship: Structure and Practice in Maring Social Organization  
Edward LiPuma

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Illustrations*

- 28 Organization of relationships in the new house food ceremony 204

*Maps*

- 1 Linguistic boundaries in the Jimi Valley 16  
2 Jimi Valley clan clusters 18

*Tables*

- 1 Conveyances of land titles 24  
2 Demographic structure of a pig herd 25  
3 Pig purchases 26  
4 Structural basis of exchange relations 30  
5 Relations of substance 45  
6 Sexual complementarity in the cultivation of food 68  
7 Categorization of cooked foods 75  
8 Market food exchanges for three families 87  
9 Gardening pairs 104  
10 The frequency of forms of recruitment 124  
11 Distribution of *ngut'e* and *at'a* on the cognatic level 130  
12 Levirate – adoption 152  
13 Forms of marriage exchange 167  
14 Distribution of marriage exchanges: a Kauwatyi Kamjepakai example 192  
15 Structure of local clan groups for the Kauwatyi clan cluster 207

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10619-1 - The Gift of Kinship: Structure and Practice in Maring Social Organization

Edward LiPuma

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Preface

This book is about the social organization of the Maring people of Highland New Guinea. I intend this study both as an ethnography of Maring social life and a theoretical contribution to the understanding of Highland social systems. Equally, the study is about the connection of structure and practice, since without a view of this connection there is no understanding of Maring social organization. The theoretical points I wish to make have texture only in relation to the ethnography itself, and so they are inter-woven throughout the text. I place equal emphasis on theory and ethnography because I see the creation of theory and a theory of ethnography as inseparable, their co-development being the means of generating an account adequate to its object.

Twice I have conducted fieldwork in the Maring area. In 1974, I spent four months with the Tuguma of the Simbai Valley. From 1979 to 1980, I resided with the Kauwatyí of the Jimi Valley. The latter stay was conducted under a research grant from the National Science Foundation.

The most important person in the writing of this manuscript has been Dr Sarah Keene Meltzoff, my wife and colleague, whom I met fortuitously walking in the mountains of New Guinea. She edited the manuscript, was a source of inspiration, and provided innumerable ethnographic insights. Sarah is an incomparable ethnographer, and some of her sensitivity has surely rubbed off. Most important to the making of this text are the many Maring who took me into their homes, aided me even as I mangled their language in my attempt to learn, and so patiently shared their experiences and laughter with me. Most important is Barnabas Gou who was my housemate, co-gardener, and companion for the duration of my stay among the Kauwatyí. We lived and slept side by side in our own “men’s house” and much of what I could ever come to know about the emotional underside of Maring life I know from the numerous evenings when Gou and

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10619-1 - The Gift of Kinship: Structure and Practice in Maring Social Organization

Edward LiPuma

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface*

I and his friends would sit beside the night fire talking about the practical concerns of everyday life. A good deal of my field technique consisted of situating myself inside one of the men's houses and recording people's humor, discussions, and arguments about gardening, land tenure, pig husbandry, the quality of plumes, the merits of war and aggressive behavior, health and sorcery, and much more. The Maring were a bit surprised that I did not spend most of my time interviewing, as they had come to see this as the proper work of the ethnographer. But after several months with my "nothing" technique, I blended into the pandanus leaves and pitpit siding of the men's house. Another crucial dimension of my field method was to take an active role in the exchange system. Both alone and in the company of friends, I made exchanges in clothes, pigs, taro, money, medicine, bushknives, and much more.

Marshall Sahlins contributed mightily to the making of this account, by virtue of his theoretical insight and as importantly by his respect for and knowledge of ethnographic data. His comments have improved the manuscript. I also wish to thank David Schneider who taught me much about kinship and about the courage to speak up theoretically in a clear and undisguised voice. In many respects, the theory which I propose herein is a result of my encounter with the anthropology of Marshall Sahlins and David Schneider, and the writings of Michael Silverstein and Pierre Bourdieu. Important as well in the making of this account are Skip Rappaport and Cherry Lowman, fellow Maringologists. Both gave much time, energy, and intelligence in an unselfish way that made me feel particularly good about doing ethnography in their company. Skip and Cherry shared in the true Maring sense of the word, in a way that leads not only to good anthropology but lasting friendship. The theory and ethnography which I present would have been impossible without their integrity and pioneering work. I would like to thank them and Roy Wagner for reading the book and offering their insights. In addition, discussions with Pierre Bourdieu were an important asset during the final stages of formulation. I am deeply grateful to the Anglican mission staff at Koinambe, principally Father Brian Bailey, who became a good and trusted friend. I would like to thank my colleagues – especially Benjamin Lee and Moishe Postone – at the Center for Psychosocial Studies for creating an intellectually rich environment. Finally, I owe thanks to Marilyn Jorge and Beatriz Figueroa for their diligence and wit during the final stages of preparation.