

Notes and Documents

THE ORIGIN OF EXOGAMY.

[THIS little paper was written in the spring of 1877. It was written hastily, in a day or two. It is, therefore, a mere first sketch. The writer meant afterwards to elaborate his view for a work which he had in preparation; but, owing to long-continued ill-health, he never arrived at the point in this work at which it would have been natural for him to take it up again. The paper, however, contains in outline what he had to say as to the possibility of a movement from capture to exogamy. It is disclosed at once that its purpose is limited to this. It passes over the facts and reasonings by which one might seek to make it probable that there was a want of balance between the sexes among early men, from which polyandry, with female kinship, and capture resulted.]

My hypothesis, so far as concerns the present purpose, is in outline as follows. The primitive groups were, or were by their members, when consanguinity was first thought of, assumed to be all of one stock. Marriage was at first unknown. In time the special attachments of children to mothers led to the subdivision of the groups into rude family groups of the Nair type, and made possible the rise and consolidation of the system of kinship through women only. Whatever other family, or rather household, groups, there were, it is attested by the system of kinship that those of the Nair type largely preponderated, and approximately, for the purposes of thinking, we may assume them all to have been of this type. While things were in this situation a practice of capturing women for wives—having its root in a want of balance between the sexes—arose, and was followed by the rise of the law of exogamy. It is the manner in which the one might give rise to the other which is now to be investigated. By the joint operation, again, of the system of capture, exogamy, and female kinship, the original homogeneity of the groups was destroyed. They lost their character as stock-groups and became local tribes, each having within it as many *gentes* of different stocks as there were original stock-groups within reach that it habitually plundered for wives. It is of course an almost necessary inference that many groups disappeared in the struggle for existence.

Whatever else may be disputable in connexion with this hypothesis, it will be admitted, I think, to be beyond dispute that the account it gives of the presence of *gentes* of precisely the same

stocks in the various local tribes inhabiting an extensive country, like Australia, is correct. Assuming it to be so, we obtain a series of inferences as to the state of the original stock-groups just before the commencement of the processes by which they were finally interfused, and every such inference, it will be seen, throws light on the rise of exogamy.

It is found that every *gens* of any stock is connected with every other *gens* of the same stock, in whatever local tribes they may be, (1) by the religious regard for the totem, which marks the stock; (2) by the obligation of the blood-feud, springing out of community of blood. This obligation must have followed the blood from its source wherever it went, as surely as the religious regard must have done so. And unless the totem bond had been fully established in the stock-groups before they became to any great extent interfused in local tribes, it could not have been established at all. It is the test, and apart from the memory of individuals, the only test, of blood relationship among the lower races; and without it, as far as we know, there is absolutely nothing which could hold together, as a body of kindred, persons descended from the same stock-group but living in different local tribes, or even the same persons living in the same local tribe. We have, then, the inference that the religious regard for the totem, the blood-feud, and of course the system of female kinship—without which no commencement of the transfusion could have taken place—were firmly established in the original stock-groups before the appearance of the *system* of capture or exogamy.

When we reflect again on the internal structure of the groups, it becomes apparent that each of them must have become subdivided into so many great families of the Nair type—holding on to primitive mothers—such as (in magnitude at least) are at a later time and in connexion with male kinship derived from common male ancestors; and that within these great families there would be subdivisions again into smaller groups of mothers and their children, or brothers and their sisters or their children. Now whether we imagine these great family groups of which the stock-groups were made up, to hold together as settled residents on the same lands, or to be nomadic and separated usually, ranging within the same district of country, we may see that they would tend to become ultimately so many separate bands. The men of each would most conveniently find their wives within their own band; and they would more frequently act together for some band purpose than in concert with the men of other bands for the stock-group's purposes. But the bands, while thus acquiring separate interests and having residences more or less apart, would be firmly united by the bonds of common blood, civil and religious. They would truly be so many septs, all of one blood.

If now we imagine some cause to initiate a practice of capturing women for wives in a district occupied by several stock-groups, each subdivided, as above conceived, into bands united by a common faith and the law of the blood-feud, we may see instantly one leading result that would follow. There would be no limitation on capture as regards capturing the women of any subdivision of a different and therefore hostile stock-group; but from the first there would be a positive limitation on the practice as regards capturing the women of any band of the stock-group to which oneself belonged. Of course in attempting any capture, as from a hostile group, the captors would be taking their lives in their hands in the adventure as an act of war. But a capture from one of the kindred bands would be more than an act of war; it would be felt to be an outrage or a crime; more than that, it would be felt to be a *sin*—a violation of the religious obligation which the blood-feud imposed, for it could not well be accomplished without the shedding of kindred blood. Moreover, all of the stock would be bound to avenge it, and we may well see how from the first it might well not only be a capital offence, but regarded with a degree of horror.

Here, then, in a law prohibiting the capturing of women of one's own stock for wives, we have every note of the subsequent law of exogamy. If we can show how this limitation on the right of capturing women for wives could be transformed into a limitation on the right of marriage, we shall have accounted for the origin of exogamy. The difficulties at this point are immense. Instead of its being possible to believe, with some thinkers, that the step was taken at a bound by 'a natural confusion' of the two things, it seems almost impossible to see how it could have been taken at all. Let us see if we can ascertain how the change might become possible.

The question is, how the ancient custom of wiving within the kindred (1) went into desuetude, and (2) came to be under the prohibition that originally applied only to *capturing* women of the kindred.

So far as there was an association between capture and marriage, the limitation on the right of capture would operate from the first as a limitation on the *exercise* of the right of marriage among kindred. If now we conceive, as required by my hypothesis, that the cause of the practice of capture was a scarcity of women, we shall see how the exercise of this right would be further restricted. The kindred bands in a group would be unwilling, and unable even if willing, to furnish one another with wives; for, on the hypothesis, women were scarce with them. Kindred wives would then be unattainable from without, by favour or purchase, and we have seen that they would be unattainable by capture. So far, then, as the men of a band were in need of women, they would be obliged

to obtain them by capture from groups of a stock different from their own. Thus the men would think more of foreign women in connexion with wiving than of kindred women, and so marriages with kindred women would tend to go into desuetude. On the other hand, the ideas of marriage and capture thus becoming more intimately associated, there would be a further approach to exogamy.

But it is a long way from disuse of an ancient right to the rearing up of an absolute interdict on its exercise. In the present case we may believe that so long as there were in a band women of the men's stock, the men would marry them. Can we feign for ourselves how men could come to be without women of their own stock? We may believe, to give what mathematicians call a singular solution of the problem, that often, where there was a *system* of capture, the men of a band might be robbed, in their absence or in open fight, of their women and female children.¹ Thereafter for these men capture and marriage would mean the same thing. The exercise of the right of marrying kindred women would be for them impossible, and the right itself therefore dead. Capture and marriage would become for them synonymous. The women they might subsequently capture being necessarily of some foreign stock, and the children of their mother's stock, there would never again be within the band women of their own stock. Such an experience, lasting for the remainder of the lifetime of the men of one generation in a band, might well establish exogamy as the marriage-law for the band. Could we imagine that such an experience as this was not uncommon, that it was perhaps frequent in its recurrence, with the bands of the various stock-groups of a country, we should have a condition of things in which, for long periods at least, marriage and capture would be practically synonymous, and whatever limitation applied to the one would apply to the other. Exogamy would become the marriage law.

But it is not necessary to make any so violent a supposition. A general cause may be shown to have been in operation which would only require assistance from such experiences as I have referred to, to complete the connexion between capture and marriage. This cause is to be found in the absolute change in the relations of husbands and wives that must have followed upon the institution of a system of capturing women for wives.

I have called Nair polyandry a mode of marriage because, in a juridical view, any relationship of persons of different sexes resting on contract and approved by public opinion—by custom or law—is marriage. But it may well have been that the rude men of whom we are thinking, matured the idea of marriage for the first time

¹ See Wallace, *Travels on the Amazon* [p. 516, also p. 362]; and *The Malay Archipelago*, i. 144-5. [These passages were probably referred to from memory; but they support the supposition made well enough.]

when the Nair species of polyandry began to decay, and give place to a mode of marriage which put the men in the first place, and women in an absolutely subordinate place in families. Under the Nair system a wife would live in the house of her mother, and under the special guardianship and protection of her brothers and mother's brothers. She would be in a position of almost absolute independence of her husbands, free within the limits of her engagements to show and act upon her preferences, and almost certainly to treat her husbands rather as favoured suitors than as lords. On a practice of capture arising all this would be changed. The captives would be the slaves of their captors—would be *owned* by them, and under their protection and guardianship. The new mode of marriage would give a sudden extension to the form of the family resting on monandry or Tibetan polyandry. There would be the cohabitation of husbands and wives, and for the first time the idea of a *wife* as a subject of her husband or husbands would become general. Now the new idea of marriage which would thus be introduced is the idea that was everywhere destined to triumph—that has in fact triumphed among all exogamous races, so far as I know. And it was natural and inevitable that it should triumph. It is easily conceivable how, once men had experience of this new marriage system, unions of kindred on the old model should not only go into desuetude but not be accounted marriages at all. If, then, we conceive that some time after the rise of a practice of capture the name of 'wife' came to be synonymous with a subject and enslaved woman in the power of her captor or captors, and the name of marriage to be applied to a man's relation to such a woman as possessor of her, the origin of exogamy becomes apparent. Since a subject and enslaved wife would, in the circumstances of the time, be attainable only by capture, marriage would be possible only through capture, and the prohibition which, as we have seen, would apply to capture, would apply to marriage. Marriage with a woman of the same stock would be a crime and a sin. It would be incest.

J. F. McLENNAN.

On the view as to the movement from capture to exogamy stated above, exogamy was in the first instance a prohibition of marriage only between persons of the same blood. There is evidence now forthcoming from Australia which helps the theory at this point, since it tends to show that exogamy is not necessarily anything more, and therefore that it was nothing more at first. The absence of such evidence, however, could not of itself make against the theory, so easy and almost inevitable does it seem that, with marriage thoroughly established, and strictly forbidden between persons of the same blood, the history of the prohibition being

unknown, irregular relations should come to be forbidden between persons of the same blood; especially when, as often happens even with female kinship, marriage has become, more or less completely, a bar to irregular relations.

The Australian evidence above referred to is as follows:—

1. Speaking of tribes about Port Lincoln in South Australia, Mr. Wilhelmi tells us² that they 'are divided into two separate classes, viz. the Matteri and the Karraru;' that 'no one is allowed to intermarry in his own caste, but only into the other one;' and that children belong to the caste of the mother. Of Mr. Wilhelmi's phraseology nothing need here be said; it is enough that he conveys to us that the tribes which were made up of Matteri and Karraru were exogamous and took kinship through the mother. As regards marriage their exogamy was strict. 'There are no instances,' he tells us, 'of two Karrarus or two Matteris having been married together.' And yet, he adds, 'connexions of a less virtuous character which take place between members of the same caste do not appear to be considered incestuous.' Irregular connexions, then, did occur between persons whose marriage would not have been tolerated, and, so far as Mr. Wilhelmi could learn, they were not objected to.

2. We are told on the authority of the Rev. W. Julius Kühn³—the statement apparently is not in Mr. Kühn's own language—that the Turra tribe, also in South Australia, consisted of two great divisions, Wiltu (eagle-hawk) and Multa (seal), the former of which contained ten, and the latter six, separate totems; that the divisions or sub-tribes were exogamous, but that any totem of the one might intermarry with any totem of the other; and that children belonged to the totem of their father, and therefore to his division or sub-tribe. Faithfulness in marriage, we are told, was expected of both husband and wife. At grand corroborees, nevertheless (the account proceeds), 'the old men took any of the young wives of the other class [sub-tribe] for the time, and the young men of the Wiltu exchanged wives with those of the Multa, and *vice versa*, but only for a time, and in this the men were not confined to any particular totem.' The statement that the men were not confined to any particular totem seems to be made with reference to a theory of Mr. Fison's, which it does not support; it was made, no doubt, in answer to a special question. For the rest, the statement leaves us to understand that the old men were free in their choice, and the younger men in their exchanges—that no exogamous restriction bound them. There is nothing to suggest that they were debarred from women of their own totem who had passed by marriage from their original sub-tribe into the other; indeed, so important an

² *The Aborigines of Victoria*, by R. Brough Smith, vol. i. p. 87.

³ *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, by Lorimer Fison and A. W. Howitt, pp. 285-7.

exception, had it been possible to make it, could not have escaped mention. And, at any rate, the men were all free from the restriction which is said to have bound them in marriage as Wiltu and Multa respectively.

The practice of the Turra people at corroborees was, no doubt, a tradition from less advanced predecessors.

8. It now seems worth while to refer to what Mr. Eyre tells us of tribes in the Adelaide district.⁴ He says that in most of the tribes the utmost license prevailed among the young, and that there was unbounded license for all on certain solemn occasions. It is clear that he believed there was no restriction whatever. But Mr. Eyre knew nothing of the marriage law.

Mr. Gideon Lang, however,⁵ makes a somewhat similar statement, and Mr. Lang was aware that the tribes which had been under his observation were exogamous in marriage.

Reference may also be made to what Mr. Beveridge has said of the tribes of the Riverina district;⁶ and to a fact reported of the Kunandaburi—a tribe of the Barcoo river, living within the Queensland boundary—by Mr. A. W. Howitt on the authority of a Mr. O'Donnell.⁷ It may be suggested, too, that certain well-known statements about the Kamilaroi need to be carefully considered with reference to the bearing they may have upon the limits of exogamy among that people. Unfortunately, Mr. Howitt gives us the bare fact he has to mention only, and the name of his authority, with the statement that he had lived some years among the Kunandaburi. And Mr. Beveridge's knowledge of the marriage law of the Riverina tribes was, no doubt, imperfect. What he says of it is, that the very slightest blood-relationship was a definite bar to marriage. But he knew there was a prohibition which applied to marrying, and that it was strictly enforced. And he assures us that, apart from marrying, there was simply no restriction whatever. He had been for twenty-three years in contact with the Riverina tribes—from 1845 to 1868. Perhaps he proves too much;

⁴ *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia in the years 1840-41.*

⁵ *The Aborigines of Australia*, p. 38.

⁶ *Journals &c. of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, 1884, p. 24.

⁷ *Australian Group Relations*, p. 8, reprinted from the Smithsonian Report for 1888. *Jus primæ noctis* allowed 'to all the men present at the camp without regard to class or kin.' If this be received (and a person who had lived for some years among the people could scarcely be mistaken about it), it shows clearly that the exogamy of the Kunandaburi was limited to marriage, and gives weight to all the indications or suggestions of exogamy being so limited which are got from the other cases mentioned. The objection to founding on it is that, while the fact is new for the Australians, no detail is given as to the order of marriage among the Kunandaburi. It may here be said that there is a reason why exogamy, if limited to marriage at first, might remain so limited among Australians—a reason consistent with the theory now submitted. It is that among many, perhaps most, of the Australian tribes a wife is prized chiefly for her services as a drudge.

a less unmeasured statement could be more easily received. But what he says has to be taken along with the impressions of Mr. Eyre and Mr. Lang, and the more definite information given by Mr. Wilhelmi and Mr. Kühn.

If the foregoing evidence raises a doubt as to the original scope of exogamy, it is enough for the purpose for which it has been adduced. And it seems at least sufficient to raise such a doubt. With a distinct statement from Mr. Kühn that in the Turra tribe men were not debarred from their own totem at the corroborees, one might go further. For that would leave no room for the suggestion that exogamous feeling, still in its original strength as regards each totem, had, by means of the totems, been weakened between the larger divisions, the Multa and Wiltu, the Matteri and Karraru—no room for the suggestion that the facts show us, not exogamy operating within its original limits, but exogamy in a state of decay. As to that, however, Mr. Howitt (who procured the information) appears to have made inquiry as to a much smaller matter—whether particular totems of the sub-tribes of the Turra people were confined to each other at those meetings—and he cannot have neglected to satisfy himself upon a question of the first importance, which is plainly raised by the statement which he has published, and in which Mr. Fison and he have, throughout their work, shown themselves to be deeply interested.

In speculating on the influence of two such factors as capture and female kinship, it is unavoidable, though the two may have acted concurrently throughout, that the attempt should be made to follow the operation of each separately, combining the results; or (which comes to the same thing) that the effects of the one should first be traced, and then those of the other added on to them. It was necessary in the preceding essay to deal with the kinship first; but it may be easily seen that there would be ample time for its development, and for tribes which had grown too large to subdivide in the manner supposed, before capture could have any effects which need be taken into account. Capture may have been practised before there was any thought of relationship; it may have been practised, more or less, all the time that kinship through females was growing up. And stranger women, captives of a hostile totem, must from the first have been in a worse position than the native-born; while their position must have grown relatively worse and worse as the growth of kinship gave the latter protectors and helped their numbers to secure them some consideration. For long, their children, being regarded as of some hostile totem, would not be allowed to live; and we may be guided in some very small measure in judging how they would compare with the women through

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whom the tribe and its totem were propagated, by observing the low position assigned to captive wives wherever we find capture practised in supplement of a regular system of marriage by contract. But it is unlikely (as the analogy of the case just mentioned shows us) that, by their numbers merely, they could sensibly lower the position of native-born women; and there appears to be no other effect which, in the state of things supposed, could follow upon their presence in a tribe. Men cannot have for *wives* (even in a polyandrous way) women who are doomed to childlessness; and (though a gradual preparation for foreign wiving would no doubt be going on) not until manners had so far softened, and hostile (that is, different) stocks grown to be so far tolerant of each other that the men of a totem could let the children of foreigners grow up in their midst, could there be a beginning of the competition between native and foreign marriage.

We may believe that the children of captive women would come to be spared at length by a sort of tacit agreement between neighbouring tribes arrived at gradually, and no doubt very slowly. At first, and, indeed, for long after it became common to spare them, each tribe might remain of one stock or totem, so far as the men were concerned. The blood-feud would, at any rate, tend to drive the sons of captives to their mothers' relatives. The daughters, such of them as were spared, would succeed to the lot of their mothers—and by-and-by would form a nucleus of women available for the lot of foreign wives who could be had without capture. The main source of supply of such wives, however, would almost necessarily be in capture until there was, within each stock, so much tolerance of foreign elements that the sons of its captives or women of foreign stock could continue to abide with it, and their daughters had as good a chance of being allowed to live as those of the native-born. That involves a great relaxation of the hostile feeling between different stocks; it would change each separate body, from being a stock of a single totem, into a more or less heterogeneous local tribe. It might give time for a long practice of getting wives by capture; and it need not be doubted that, once a preference for foreign wives had become general among men, understandings would be arrived at between tribes or methods devised (such as occur in known examples) with a view to their making captures easy for each other—understandings or methods such as might lead in time to contract with the form of capture. With tribes become heterogeneous, of course, the need for captures might cease; men might find within their own borders wives enough of different blood from their own—wives obtained at length by friendly bargain, but who would succeed to the subject lot proper to captive women and their daughters.

It scarcely need be said that either monandry or Tibetan poly-

andry might exist along with female kinship. This kinship must have lasted at least till after local tribes had become heterogeneous, if, with exogamous (that is, foreign) marriage, it furnishes the only adequate explanation of the heterogeneity. And, with the totem relationship already founded on it (as, by hypothesis, it was), it could not be superseded all at once or at the will of single individuals or brotherhoods, nor until the minds of people living together, and even of their neighbour peoples, were generally prepared for the change. Moreover, capture, so long as it was practised to any considerable extent (since it would render fatherhood still in many cases uncertain), would tend to keep it up; and so also would the liberty of intercourse between people of the same stock, so long as that subsisted.

The supposition that a stock-group would subdivide into bands composed of persons specially related to each other, though obviously useful, does not seem to be indispensable to the theory of the essay—at any rate, a little of such subdivision suffices for it. Without that, we may see that the lot of native women must have been very different from the lot of captive women, and that one of the former could not be treated like the latter without outrage, and no more is indispensable. Nevertheless, the conditions of subsistence would, in early times, almost necessarily make each separate band a very small one, and such subdivision as is supposed might be of frequent occurrence.

As to the use made of capture in the essay (though it should not be necessary), it seems to be necessary to say that it is assumed that what men are known to have done in a certain case prehistoric men in the same or a similar case would do. Within times known to us, men have practised capture (though they have done so also without necessity, no doubt) when women have been scarce with them, whenever they could not otherwise get wives. And, in particular, men have practised capture (or got their wives after a form of capture, which shows that their predecessors had to capture their wives) because they have been exogamous in marriage. On the theory stated in the essay, men, having begun to capture chiefly because their own women were few, formed in time through their relations with captive women a preference for subject wives, and got them by capture because at first and for long they could get them by capture only; while the exemption of their own women from the fate of the captive, so far as each stock was itself concerned, formed, when a marriage system founded on capture had come to prevail, a limitation on marriage, which was exogamy in its earliest form. How exogamy may force men into a system of capturing wives is excellently illustrated by the case of the Mirdites.*

* *Researches in the Highlands of Turkey*, by the Rev. H. J. Tozer, vol. i. pp. 318 *et seq.*

The theory assumes that the desire for subject wives, once it had become general, would have effect given to it in the same way, while the exemption of women living among their own people from the lot of captive wives would make marriage in fact exogamous. The Mirdites get their wives by capture because exogamy is—they know not why—a law with them. Prehistoric men, be it observed, would be, as regards marriage, in precisely the same position as soon as the reason for their not taking their own women in marriage ceased to be thought of. Exogamy in marriage would then, at latest, be fully established. And after that the limitation upon marriage might easily grow into a prohibition of all connexions between persons of the same blood. The occurrence of the form of capture along with female kinship shows, however, that the association between capture and marriage was in some cases not easily or quickly lost sight of. There are some peculiar Australian facts, too, which suggest that among certain Australians, after exogamy had been established for people of the same totem, and local tribes had been made heterogeneous by it, capture of wives was practised so extensively that it even availed to give a wider scope to exogamy in marriage. The principle that if it is wrong to capture a woman it is wrong to marry her will, at any rate, account for marriage being forbidden (as it is in most of the cases referred to) between persons of the same local tribe, even when they are of different totems, and also for it being forbidden (as it is in one or two cases) between all persons of those neighbour tribes who speak the same dialect. Comity and the fear of consequences (especially the latter) would make capture as impossible in the small Australian local tribe as it would be in a body of people all of one totem; and might make it, even as between neighbour tribes having dealings with each other, much too troublesome not to be very seriously disapproved of. And marriage is forbidden within the limits within which a capture might thus have been deemed an outrage.

A statement made towards the close of the essay makes it proper to add (and no more can now be done) that no case of beenah marriage—not even an exclusive practice of it by exogamous tribes, the only case of it which is not easily intelligible—makes any difficulty for the theory therein submitted. D. McL.

THE LEGEND OF SEMIRAMIS.

THE question which has been discussed in this REVIEW (ii. 97, 807, 729) by Mr. Gilmore and Mr. Robertson Smith has a natural interest for me, and I have already touched upon it in my 'Herodotos' and elsewhere. The proofs that the legend of Semiramis is