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DEATH, WOMEN, AND "VALUE PRODUCTION": THE CIRCULATION OF HAIR STRINGS AMONG THE WALPIRI OF THE CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN DESERT

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Weiner (1981) has provided some stimulating interpretations and hypotheses concerning the relationship between the circulation of goods produced exclusively by women and social reproduction. Comparing Samoa and the Trobriand Islands, she interprets the production and circulation of fine mats as a necessary condition for social reproduction. These fine mats, exclusively made and decorated by women, represent the group's cultural (mythical/historical) heritage, and are recognized as such by the men who say that these mats have more value for them than gold has for white men. Weiner observes that these objects of circulation and alliance return to the original descent line—that of the woman who produced the fine mat—when one of the members of this descent line dies. It is as though the symbolic rupture in the circulation was necessary in order to negate the gap produced by a member's death. At the same time, this symbolic rupture allows the circulation to start again. It guarantees the dead person's rebirth by repeating the cyclic reproduction on which the world view of these societies depends. She (Weiner 1981) interprets these fine mats as the incarnation of women's secret power which, in its symbolic form and its real transmission, acts as a challenge to men's power, without implying a neutralization of the tendency towards male domination or a reduction in men's secular power. Rather, women's potential resistance is seen as necessary, even if it is contrary to the reproduction of the social system in general. In other words, women's role in production and exchange systematically questions the legitimacy that men want to make of their own power.

Having carried out two periods of field work in Australia (1979 and 1980) among the Walpiri at Lajamanu (a central desert community), I will try to show here a determining role of Aboriginal women in social reproduction similar to that described by Weiner (1981) for the Pacific Islands women. This can be best understood through analyzing the circulation of hair strings which symbolize a privileged form of exchange among many of the 500 Australian Aboriginal peoples. These strings are not exclusively made by women, but systematically at each bereavement it is the women—according to their kinship relationship with the deceased person—who, more often than men, cut their hair and make strings

from it. They give these strings to their maternal uncles, who then circulate them among the men. In situations of symbolic death (like initiation), however, it is the men who cut their hair in order to make strings that are exchanged between brothers-in-law and indirectly given to wives or daughters-in-law.

This paper offers an analysis of the symbolic values represented by the circulation of hair strings, their place in social reproduction, and the field of action thus opened to women. In order to do this, it is first necessary that we briefly outline the principles of land control, and in particular the relations of real and symbolic kinship, at the level of ritual management in ceremonies. We then will see that women have considerable power in this area, a condition which has not been recognized by many anthropologists (Rohrlich-Leavitt *et al.* 1975).

DESCENT AND THE PATRICLAN TERRITORY

Hair strings circulate among individuals, clans, or tribes. Every Aboriginal has in his possession some to be used in healing rituals. It is said that these strings draw out sickness, they "detach" sickness from the body while "binding up" the body. They are also used as head bands or belts; for many groups they constitute the only clothes. It is these hair strings that are used to form the cross emblem in circumcision ceremonies (called *Kuriji* among the Walpiri). For Australian Aborigines, as for many other peoples, hair is a sexual symbol and often used in love magic rituals. As it represents virility, the Walpiri people will let blood drip on a novice's head so that his hair will grow. The strings of all Australian groups are coated with red ochre, the symbol of blood. This incarnates women's fertility and, for the Walpiri, all the life forces of ancestral heroes.

The concept of life forces is central to the principles of identity transmission and land ownership. Every man and woman is the trustee of at least one specific life force identified with his or her totemic ancestor and the territory of the ancestor. "Totemic," here corresponds to the association of an ancestral hero with a natural species and with a track and sites identifiable by his passage. All these associations are known in English as "Dreaming" (Peterson *et al.* 1978). Every ancestor, incarnated by an animal, plant, or other natural element such as water or fire, is said to have emerged out of the ground, made a voyage, and left traces of his passage in the Dream Time in the form of trees, water holes, caves, rocks or other landmarks. At each of these sites, and in particular at the place where the ancestor is said to have re-entered the ground at the end of his voyage, the ancestor's life forces reside.

Traditional anthropological research has identified many of these sites, at which the initiated men of a patriclan carry out secret ceremonies. The emphasis on masculine sites has led to the assumption that women were excluded from land control. But recent research (Hamilton 1978) among the Bidjandjara shows that women, too, have their sites. Similarly, the Walpiri have a symbolic sexual division of land, myths and corresponding totemic species. Walpiri men and women of the same patriclan, while remaining the ritual owners of the same totemic tracks, do not celebrate the same ancestral heroes. They have separate responsibility with regard to different life forces, and are linked to different but complementary totemic species (see Table 1). Brothers and sisters inherit the same patriclan Dreaming (*Djugurba* for the Walpiri), but while men celebrate patrilineal life forces, women tend to celebrate matrilineal life forces. Both men and women call their life forces *Guruwari*, although Munn (1974) states that women are not trustees of *Guruwari*. Women, as wives and mothers of the members of territorial patriclan, tend to celebrate heroines defined by their kinship subsections. In other words, in the Walpiri eight subsection system, divided into four classificatory exogamic patrilineal lines (each of them corresponding to two alternating subsections), these heroines are exterior to the territory owning patriclan. The men's heroes, defined as the fathers of the patriclan

TABLE 1
Dreamings Owned by Men and Women

EXOGAMIC MOIETY (wuururu)							
2 classificatory patriline:							
couple of sub-sections "father/son" or "father's sister/daughter"							
MEN		WOMEN		MEN		WOMEN	
Japangardi	Napangardi	Japaljari	Napaljari	Jampijimpa	Nampijimpa	Jakamara	Nakamara
Japanangka	Napanangka	Jungarrayi	Nungarrayi	Jangala	Nangala	Juburulla	Naburulla
DREAMINGS ASSOCIATED WITH DISPUTE SETTLING CEREMONIES							
MALA (rat kangaroo)		MALA (rat kangaroo)		YANKIRRI (emu)		YARRAPIRI (snake)	
		PULUWANTI (owl)				WAMPANA (hare wallaby)	
FERTILITY CULT AND INITIATION CYCLE				RAIN MAKING CEREMONIES			
KAJIRRI-JARRA		KAJIRRI-JARRA		NGAPA (water)		NGAPA (water)	
(2 men)		(2 men)		MAWURUNGU (thunder)		WARLU (fire)	
(2 sisters)		(2 sisters)		?		?	
↓		↓		WATIYA (tree)		WAPIRTI (small yam)	
KANTA (fruit)		MINPIRI (berry)					
KALA-KALA (fruit)		NGARLU (honey)					
LAJU (worm)		MUNIKIYI (bee)					
?		?					
(see note)		WURDAMIRI (bark)					
		WIRKALI (blood-wood tree)					
				NGURLU (seed)		↓	
						IMALI-MALI	
						small lezard	
						becomes 3 species of seeds:	
						PARALA (white)	
						LUKARARA (black)	
						LUKARIJA (yellow)	
						PIRI (coolamin*)	
				PAMAPARDU (sugar bag)		PAMAPARDU (sugar bag)	
DREAMINGS ASSOCIATED WITH CIRCUMCISION							
KARNTA (women)		KARNTA (women)		WATIYA (tree)		MARLUJARRA (2 kangaroos)	
		NGARRKA (initiated man)				WARLU (fire)	
		?					
		WURDAMIRI (bark)					
		WIRKALI (blood-wood tree)					
		WAWULJA (old man)		MALIYARRA (initiated young man)			
WIRNTIKI (stone curlew)		NGATIJJIRRI (green budgerigar)		MALIKI (wild dogs)		MALIKI (wild dogs)	
		?					
		PALPALANU (4 stars)					
		MUNGA (night)					
PILJA (goanna)		PILJA (goanna)				YIPILANJI (worm)	
		LUNCKARDA (blue-tongue lezard) ..		LUNCKARDA (blue-tongue lezard) ..			
↓		WAKULYARI (rock wallaby)		WARNA (snake)			
WARNA (snake)		?		MAWURUNGU (thunder)		YAWAKIYI (bush plum)	
		YARUNKANI (white ant)					
		baked termitary becomes:					
		PIRI (coolamin*)					
		MARLU (kangaroo)				JANGANPA (opossum)	

2 : Coolamin = wooden vessel used for carrying food or babies.

NOTE: I did not find testimonies on the existence of secret species that men would associate to the Dreaming tracks that they share with women (as women do). This research orientation could only be pursued by a man.

(brothers and sisters have the same subsection name), bear a name of the two subsections that define the classificatory patriline associated with a patriclan. (There are about 40 Walpiri patriclans.) These heroes are therefore "fathers" who are in the paternal great-grandfather subsection or "brothers" who are in the paternal grandfather's subsection of alternating generations of the patriclan's members. The women's heroines of a patriclan are defined in relation to men's heroes but also to men as their "mothers" in one generation and their "wives" in the alternate generation. In relation to the women of a patriclan, these heroines are therefore "mothers" of one generation and "sisters-in-law" of the other generation.

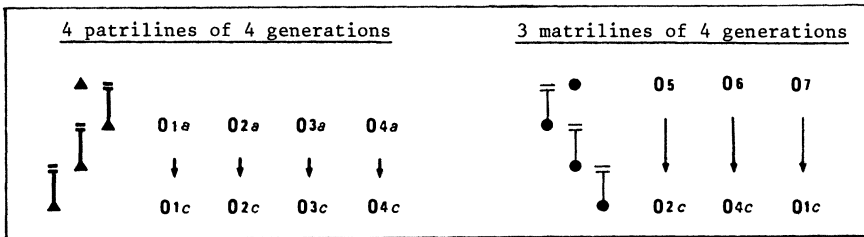
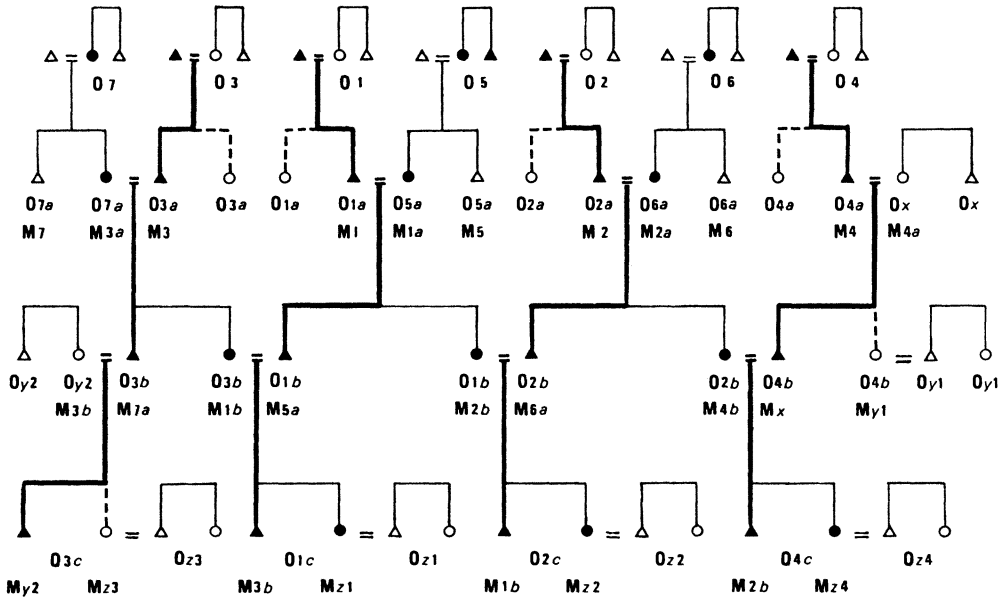
The kinship relationship between sisters-in-law influences female ceremonies of land ownership. Walpiri women have a system of ritual management in their territorial ceremonies which is determined by their position in the kinship system similar to that observed among men by Meggitt (1962). A woman must manage the ceremonies of her husband's sisters while her ceremonies are managed by her brother's wives (Figure 1). Among men, this relation of ceremony management occurs between two generations; a man must manage the ceremonies of his mother's brothers and his ceremonies are therefore managed by his sisters' sons (Figure 1). The role of managers (*kurdungulu*) is critical. They are responsible for painting sacred objects and the dance choreography. Without them, an owner's (*kirda*) ceremony cannot be held.

The transmission of owners' responsibility of land occurs patrilineally for both men and women, who inherit their father's totemic track (their shared Dreaming). However, young girls are initiated into the specific feminine aspects of celebrating their paternal heritage (dances, graphic drawings, songs, sacred objects) by their father's sisters. A man and his sister are therefore the owners of their father's territory. A man also manages the ceremonies of his mother's land and his sister manages those of her husband's land. However, through the kinship system, the husband's territory (and that of his sisters whose ceremonies must be managed by his wife) is highly likely to be the original territory of a paternal grandmother of any member of the patriclan (Figure 1).

Having noted that women's heroines are defined as "sisters-in-law" in one generation of the patriclan, which corresponds to the "mothers" of the other generation, it is significant that the principle of ritual management in ceremonies among sisters-in-law is in fact a round-about way of managing someone else's ceremonies and having one's own ceremonies managed by women who are foreign to the patriclan but who personify its members. The principle of women's identity with nonpatriclan heroines who incarnate the patriclan Dreaming(s) indicates a specific symbolic intention of women; they govern the celebration of their territory and that of their fathers and patriclan ancestors, stressing the procreative powers of nonpatriclan women ancestors, without whom the patriclan would not have existed. The reproduction of the patriclan depends on the continuous exogamous marriages of its men with women who are defined as classificatory sisters of these heroines. These heroines' life forces, therefore, are just as necessary for the group's survival as are those of the patriclan heroes celebrated by men. In their own way, men sometimes celebrate such heroines, just as women sometimes celebrate patriclan heroines (or even heroes) but, above all, it is the ritual responsibility of women in the patriclan to guarantee the life forces of their ancestral "sisters-in-law."¹ This is a principle of symbolic exchange between the sexes; women and men alike have an indispensable ritual activity concerning land control and land resources.

That a woman owns the totemic tracks of her father and is initiated by his sisters was previously mentioned. She is managed in her territorial ceremonies by her brothers' wives and she must manage her husband's sisters' ceremonies. These ceremonies are connected to the totemic tracks of her husband. A man also

FIGURE 1: Interclan Kinship Diagram at the Level of Ritual Management in Ceremonies (role called "kurdungulu")



Note : Brothers and sisters are owners (O) of the same land that they inherit from their father :

- . a man (▲) is manager (M) of the ceremonies of his mother's brother while his own ceremonies are managed by his sister's son
- . a woman (●) is manager (M) of the ceremonies of her husband's sister while her own ceremonies are managed by her brother's wife.

Men and women are owners (O) and managers (M) ; for example, the man "O1c" is the manager (M3b) of the owner "O3b" who is the manager (M7a) of the owner "O7a" who is the manager (M7) of the owner "O7", and the sister of this man "O1c" also designated by "O1c" is the manager (Mz1) of the woman owner "Oz1".

owns the totemic tracks of his father and is initiated by the men of his patriclan. He is managed in his ceremonies by his sisters' sons, and he must manage his mother's brothers' ceremonies—both being outside his own patriclan. Men and women are both owners of the patriclan Dreaming; the former identify themselves with patrilineal life forces, while the latter identify themselves with the matrilineal life forces of the patriclan. Finally, both men and women manage the ceremonies of individuals who represent, directly for men and indirectly for women, the matrilineal life forces. Now we shall see how the same kinship relationship, the issue of land control, and the double transmission of patrilineal and matrilineal forces are rediscovered in the symbolic exchange of funeral rituals.

A MAN'S DEATH

At a man's death, the real or classificatory brothers of the mother of the deceased are compensated for this loss by his classificatory mothers. Women's funeral gifts to their brothers are food gifts. (Traditional food is today replaced by flour, sugar, and bread.) Women other than the mothers may contribute to these gifts. The deceased's mother's brothers inherit any of his goods and his hair and fore-arm bone. Since it is a maternal nephew who ritually manages land ownership, we can appreciate the importance of the loss for maternal uncles who have thus been deprived of a manager.

In mourning, a dead man's mother, wives, sisters, daughters and mothers-in-law (and, in some cases, his father's sisters) cut their hair. On the day of the funeral, they, and all other women of the tribe, cover themselves with white clay and hit their heads with a digging stick to make themselves bleed. (Today they use iron bars or tin-cans.) The deceased man's sisters and his father's sisters are excepted. Their role is to prevent the other women from hurting themselves too much.

The classificatory "mothers" and widows are then isolated for a while in a camp specially constructed for this occasion. There they observe silence and communicate only by means of a very elaborate gestural language² until the mourning period ends. These women's brothers ritually finish this period of silence, but the women decide beforehand the length of the mourning period. In traditional times, this could last one year. Nowadays, it may persist for only two weeks.

Men also display signs of mourning, although they are not isolated or obliged to observe silence. They cry ritually (imitating a dog's howl), their hair may be cut, and they slash their thighs or stomach with knives. At the level of classificatory kinship, the men concerned by a death are: fathers (= sons' subsection); brothers (= paternal grandfather's subsection); the mother's brothers; the mother's mother's brothers; the brothers-in-law; the wives' mothers' brothers; the sisters' sons; the sisters' daughters' husbands and sons; and the father's sisters' sons (Meggitt 1962). As with the women, some men must prevent the others from hurting themselves too much, particularly the dead man's brothers and his sisters' sons. Once the mourning period has ended, the women give hair strings—made from their daughters' hair—to their brothers (the dead man's uncles). This transmission of hair (cut only at the time of a death) from a woman to her maternal uncle very often occurs at times other than funerals. The participation of women in the circulation of strings made of their hair is carried out throughout their lives by the medium of their mother. The strings are destined for their mother's brothers.

A woman gives her hair strings to her mother's brother in exchange for the protection given by him to her. He is in fact obliged to defend his niece's interests concerning marriage, as also, Meggitt (1962:124) reports, they share the same matrilineal "spirit."

All members of a matriline share a vaguely defined and impersonal spirit that the child automatically acquires while in its mother's womb. The latter notion has none of the ritual elaboration that characterizes attitudes towards lodge patrispirits.

This matrilineal spirit, which we call "life forces," characterizes the specific nature of women's ownership of the patriclan territory. Women are thus responsible (for themselves and for the men) for these matrilineal life forces that are inseparable from the patrilineal life forces celebrated by men. This dependence on women is expressed by the ritual management of men requiring the participation of men who bear this matrilineal spirit during ceremonies; a woman's brothers are managed in their ceremonies by her sons.

While the mother's brothers are compensated at the death of a man, fathers are not. Yet it is the latter who lose a link in their reproduction and, with the patriclan principle of land ownership, also lose a future potential transmitter of land ownership; so essential for the group's survival as a whole. In other words, a man's death is symbolically more serious from the point of view of interrupted management (as concerns the mother's brother, her clan and her land) than from the point of view of interrupted ownership, because no ownership is possible without management.

A WOMAN'S DEATH

A woman's mother's brothers are responsible for ritually giving her to her future husband (Meggitt 1962). Before this, they participate in men's deliberations concerning her marriage, trying to defend the interests of their sister; i.e., the mother of the woman to be married. It is their responsibility to cut the future husband's hair after his circumcision and they can perform penis subincision on him too (an indispensable operation for marriage).

Women share the same matrilineal spirit with their maternal uncles. It is precisely this transmission, as well as the exchange relationship between them, that are threatened when a woman dies. This exchange relationship is symbolized by the hair strings a woman gives her maternal uncle in order to "attach" him. Actually, throughout his entire life, he is expected to defend his niece's interests. It is a woman's mother who inherits her belongings.³

At a woman's death, the mother's brothers have to be compensated, but only by her husband and his brothers and not by the deceased woman's mother and her classificatory sisters. The hypothesis I propose here is that the compensation of a dead woman's maternal uncles constitutes an indirect gesture aimed at the dead woman's mother. Throughout her life, she cannot speak to her son-in-law, who reciprocally has the same taboo. She is compensated for losing her daughter (rather, the productive abilities of her daughter) with provision in game that her son-in-law must give to her. In its analogy to the speech taboo and compensation, the mother-in-law/son-in-law relationship is like a relationship of permanent symbolic mourning. This might explain why, in the case of a daughter's death, a "substitute" (her maternal uncles) is needed for the mother, who should be compensated. Mourning a woman's death are her mother, her mother's sisters, her sisters, her daughters, her father's sisters, her daughters-in-law, and her mother-in-law. The men concerned by a woman's death are her husband and his brothers, her brothers, her father and his brothers, her brothers' sons, her mother's brothers, her daughters' sons, her mother's mother's brothers, and her husband's mother's brothers (Meggitt 1962).

COMPENSATION OF THE MOTHER'S BROTHERS

Significantly, whether for a woman's or a man's death, it is the deceased person's mother's brothers who are compensated. For a woman, it is the husband who is responsible for this compensation, and for a man, it is the mother. This is so even though it appears that their loss, through direct blood links and marriage

links, is as great as or greater than that of the mother's brothers. Aside from the emotional aspect of this loss, we know the economic importance of a son for a woman (her brother's manager of her land) and of a wife for a man (his sister's manager of his land). We also know that there is another economic issue at stake between a mother and her daughter and between a woman and her husband; a woman receives game from her son-in-law and from her husband in exchange for her fertility (real or symbolic).

Compensating a mother for a man's death and a husband for a woman's death occurs because a mother's and a husband's roles embody the process of social reproduction, linear transmission, and alliances. Their compensation is a sort of a final transfer of (or the return to a starting point which allowed, from the deceased person's birth until his or her death) a series of links essential to social reproduction (Weiner 1981). These links are, on the one hand, the ritual management of the land's symbolical fertility and, on the other hand, the complementary aspect of hunting and collecting between the sexes, on which depends the men's fertility. For a man, this complementary aspect is transmitted by his wife's mother (for whom he must provide game), and for a woman it comes from her daughter's husband (who must provide her with game) (Hamilton 1979). Men and women are complementary in terms of husbands and mothers but not in terms of fathers and wives.

The management of a man's ceremonies depends on his sister (who must give him her sons as managers) and that of a woman on her brothers (who must give her their wives as managers). In other words, the brother/sister relationship is essential at the level of mediation between the moieties for ceremonial management and appears to be highlighted in death compensation. A deceased man's mother "replaces" her brother's loss, but this replacement is a symbol of an end because the son is dead. From this point on, the woman will never give any gifts to her brother, just as she never did during her son's life. This gift transfer is seen as a death transfer; the condition for a transformation. Actually, the deceased man's sister (the giving woman's daughter) takes over a life transfer which is constituted by her alliance with her maternal uncle, to whom she gives her hair strings through her mother acting as intermediary. If only the setting up of death transfer (which puts management at risk) is involved, we could wonder why, for a woman's death, the husband does not compensate his sisters' loss of a manager. But since the issue at stake in ceremony management between men is that the managers share the same matrilineal spirit as their uncles, it is also this transmission which is compensated on a woman's death.

At the classificatory kinship level, women's managers of a patriclan incarnate its mythical heroines. These women tend to have one of the patriclan's matrilineal spirits. The female managers may or may not share the same matrilineal spirit as the woman whose ceremonies they manage, for, with respect to women's myths linked to the patriclan's territorial ceremonies, there is more than one matrilineal spirit. The brothers' wives of the female owners of a patriclan, who act as managers, are symbolic substitutes of the patriclan "mothers," with whom the female owners share the same matrilineal spirit.

Walpiri identity transmission is not through actual biological blood ties; men do not acknowledge their role in a child's conception. The territorial clan identity is given to a child only through initiation. Women conceive but they do not thereby transmit their "identity" (territorial life force) to the child. A woman is initiated by her father's sisters but she does not ritually manage her mother's ceremonies, whereas her brothers manage her mother's brothers' ceremonies. However, the women whose ceremonies she does manage (her husband's sisters) and the women who manage her ceremonies (her brothers' wives) are her patriclanic classificatory grandmothers. Thus, there is a difference between men and women in kinship organization for the transmission of ritual identity. Yet the aim is the

same; the need for a physical separation of mother and child (boy or girl), and the need for an intermediary personified ritual that allows mother and child to be bound at another level. For both boys and girls this happens through the mother's brother by a symbolic process. A boy or a girl can reidentify with their mother by finding their sexual identity outside of her; by becoming detached from her. In a psychoanalytic sense, the mother's brother plays the mediating role of the mother's "phallus." In this way, the mother's symbolic image is not an incomplete one with regard to the other sex; the child has less chance of being appropriated by its mother as a symbolic phallus and becomes dissociated from her as a complete entity. A boy or a girl can reason, "If my mother has a 'phallus,' then I can have one, too," thus accepting their sexual identity.⁴ This is also suggested from penis subincision ceremonies (the dramatization of men's symbolic androgenic power), when the initiated boy's sisters gash their chest as if to show on their bodies that their brother's wound is also theirs.

Then why, be it at a man's or a woman's death, is it the men, specifically the mother's brothers, who are compensated? Within the death-transfer logic and the cycle of end, returning to a new beginning, the mother's brothers act as intermediaries for boys and girls to effect a symbolic detaching-binding relationship with their mother, which is necessary not only for their sexual identity but also as an important social life condition. Mother's brothers act also as intermediaries for the dead people's return to their mother. Children are born out of the Dreaming; the totemic conception site and the nocturnal dream that reveals it. From this original Dream Time unit, the dead are said to return to the Dream Time of their patrilin totemic site (which usually is on the same track as the conception site).

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, ALLIANCES AND HAIR STRINGS CIRCULATION

Because they give life, women are the custodians of death. Death is seen as a return to the Dreaming, to the land where the unity between a mother and child is possible and desired in order to ensure a new birth. Each child is in fact only the reincarnation of an ancestral life force. This is the very principle of the Dreaming. Now we can understand the importance of hair-cutting and the symbolic value of hair in hair strings transmission. Just as a child is detached from its mother so it can live, just as death separates an individual from the group, hair, detached from the body, symbolizes the bonds between people who go through a succession of reincarnations of a life force in a patriline. It is also the symbolic return of the deceased's mother who, in her turn, retransmits her child's life force to its conception site. Since it is recognized that women have the privilege of biological reproduction, it is also apparent why they are systematically sought out at a death to cut their hair. Men, as the deceased's brothers, are entrusted with cutting the dead person's hair, just as they symbolically separate boys and girls from their mothers by initiation or marriage. Thus women's hair symbolizes matrilineal transmission as a condition of patrilineality; a child must be separated from his mother in order to be initiated, own his father's territory and manage the ceremonies of his mother's brothers' territory. Women's hair is then used in the circulation of this vital transmission value between men and women, and between men, clans, and tribes. It is true that men may possibly cut their own hair at someone's death but they usually cut it in ritual circumstances of symbolic and not real death; i.e., initiation. The transmission of men's hair occurs reciprocally between brothers-in-law—the man who receives it makes the string—through the intermediary of the sister who is the physical go-between. These strings symbolize transmission through alliance and this value is acquired through the intermediary of women as sisters and sisters-in-law.

With both instances of hair transmission—from a woman to her maternal uncle and from a man to his sister's husband—it is a woman (as mother or the sister)

who is at the origin of these two links. Meggitt (1962) notes that, before circumcision, a boy novice is taken on an initiation trip to other communities by his guardians—his sisters' husbands—and there his sisters' classificatory sons (even distant ones) give him hair strings to hand over to his father. Figure 2 illustrates how the "sisters' sons" (2) are, through subsection kinship terminology, the potential "fathers-in-law" (3) of the boy novice (1). In other words, the relationship between novice and his potential fathers-in-law brings a matrilineal transmission into play. It is as the mother's "brother" (8) of these men (2) that the novice (1) receives the strings. This gift symbolizes the general ceremony management that men owe their mother's brothers. When the novice transmits these strings to his father (4), who is the givers' (2) mother's (8) "father," the matrilineal transmission is thus reconfirmed.

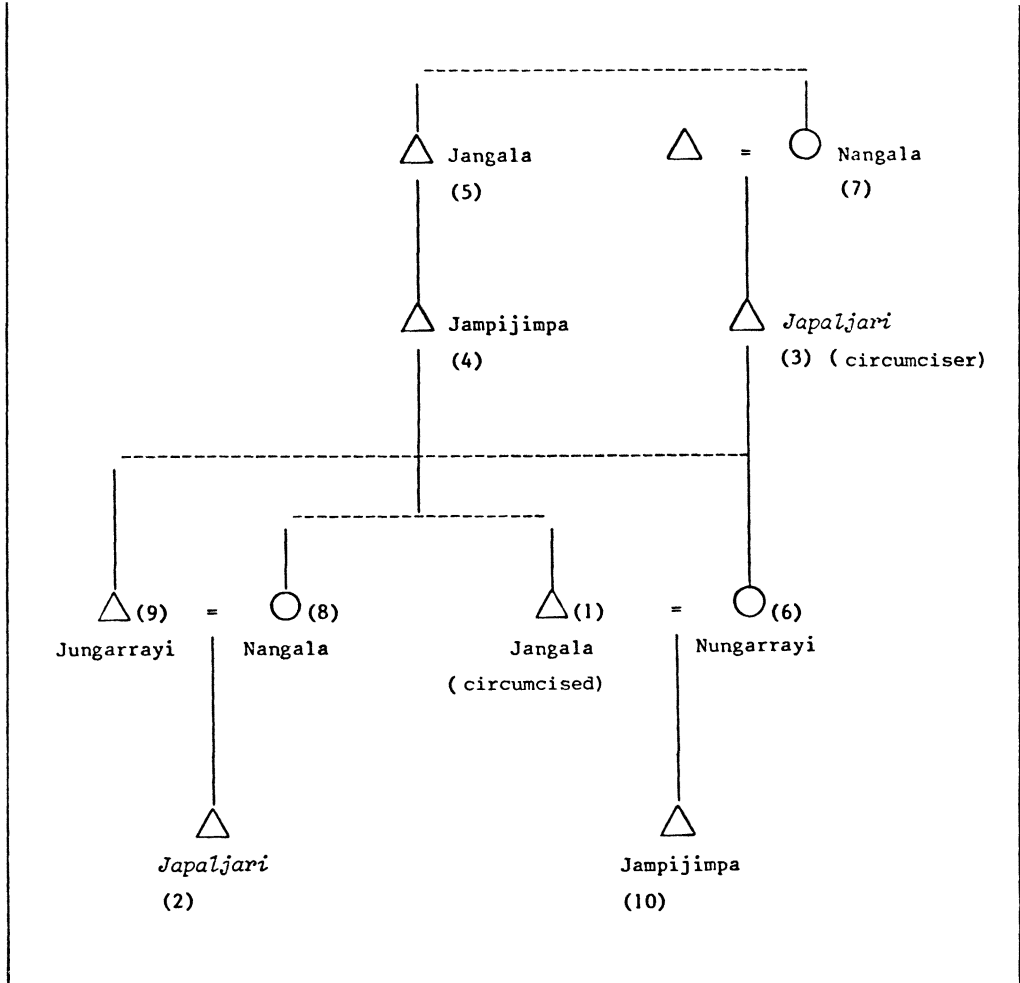
The man who circumcises a boy is, in principle, his future father-in-law (3) and, after the circumcision, he must be paid for having done it, particularly with hair strings. This time, it is the circumcised boy's father (4), and sometimes the "brothers" (5) of the father's father's generation, who contribute their hair to help the boy in paying his debt. It means that the circumcised boy's father (4), as the future father-in-law's (3) "cross-cousin" (a "son of the brother" of the mother (7) of this future father-in-law), passes symbolically through his father's sister (7), who is also his classificatory daughter (8), the future father-in-law (3) being her "grandson" (2). During a circumcision ceremony, but after the other women have left, the father's sisters are even allowed to see the men's sacred and secret objects.

Transmitting the strings before and after circumcision are reserved for this specific occasion. With the kinship relation of (1) and (2) or (3), on the one hand, and (4) and (2) or (3), on the other, men do not usually exchange. Otherwise, the exchange of a man's hair is repeated throughout his life and this happens, as we have already seen, with his brother(s)-in-law ((1) and (9)).

A boy, at the time of his seclusion for circumcision, is looked after by his sisters' husbands, who give their hair for the strings. Those strings are used to make the cross, the emblem of the circumcision ceremony. When the seclusion period ends, the novice's hair is cut by his future wife's mother's brother. It is after his initiation—a boy's symbolic death—that a boy's principle economic exchanges—alliances symbolized by hair—are instituted. Actually, brothers-in-law are privileged hunting partners who exchange their access rights to their respective territorial resources. Women also have a ritual ceremony management relationship with regard to their husbands' sisters, who in their turn are managed in their ceremonies by their brothers' wives. In other words, men's nonritualized economic relationship—there is no ritual ceremony management between brothers-in-law—goes through a ritual economic exchange between women.

Meggitt (1962:134) observed that if a marriage among the Walpiri, like other tribes with a classificatory kinship system of eight subsections, appears to be an exchange between men of sisters, it does not constitute a simple exchange because of the father's, the mother's brothers', and the maternal grandmother's brothers' "contradictory" interests in the marriage. This should be understood in relation to the importance of women for marriage decisions—in particular of the maternal grandmother, who often gives her name to her granddaughter—as Hamilton (1970) and Bell and White (1978) have pointed out for the Walpiri and other tribes. I (Glowczewski 1981) showed that men's dependence on their sisters, who furnish them with ritual ceremony managers, induces them to become women's lawyers during men's deliberations concerning a marriage. That is, a mother's brothers and a maternal grandmother's brothers defend their sisters interests in their own interest. Women simply are not objects of exchange between men, whatever transactions men may carry out. Women produce value beyond the fact of giving birth to children. Their place within the ritual and

FIGURE 2: Kinship Example (Circumciser/Novice to be Circumcised) with Four Subsections



economic exchange network between each other, as well as their productive (giving their hair) and mediating (transmitting their brothers' hair to their husbands) roles in men's exchanges, means that women are not merely alliance objects.

HAIR AND MATERIAL: A SYMBOLIC LIAISON FUNCTION

Women, through their mothers as intermediary, give their hair to men and men, through their sisters, give their hair to other men. Ordinarily, women do not receive men's hair. But there is one ritual occasion where men give their hair to women. This happens at the end of a boy's initiation, at the annual initiation cycles that follow the circumcision but precede a boy's subincision ceremony. Among the Walpiri, these cycles are mainly linked to the *Kajirri-Jarra* fertility cult (*kajirri*, "initiation," and *jarra*, "two"). It concerns two totemic figures; two men for the men, or two women for the women, as symbols of fertility (Meggitt 1966; Glowczewski 1981). During the five months' duration of the cycle, the boy

novices are kept in seclusion with men who show them ceremonies, teach them how to hunt, and take them on initiation trips to other communities.

At the conclusion of the cycle, just before the novices return to the family camps, a ritual celebration is held at which sons and mothers are reunited. Sons then give their mothers men's hair strings derived from their fathers and brothers. That is to say, the women receive hair strings either from classificatory "husbands" or "sons" (both men from the son's patriclan; "fathers-in-law," if they come from the husband's father's generation). Mothers are thus compensated for the loss of their symbolically dead sons, who were taken away from them to be initiated. I (Glowczewski 1981:18) witnessed this at the end of the *Kajirri-Jarra* cycle in October 1979:

Early in the morning on the last day of the fertility cult cycle, all the women from Lajamanu accompanied the "businesswomen"⁵ to the men's camp to be present at the mother-son reunion which marked the end of their sons' seclusion. On the way, the woman "boss" in charge of the cycle secretly buried two sacred digging sticks, incarnations of two of the women's mythical heroines. (The day before, the women cried, sad with the prospect that their heroines were going to leave them temporarily. For the five months of the cycle's celebration, these two sticks had been painted every two days or so with different secret designs, and ritually stuck in the ground and removed again in the single women's camp used for women's ceremonies.) When the women arrived at the men's camp, the men covered the boy novices with red ochre-coated hair strings and piles of cloth.⁶ They then brought the boys, hidden under the cloth, to the mothers—the only women standing up in the crowd of women. The other women were sitting and the crowd was divided into eight groups corresponding to the eight subsections. After the mothers took the pieces of cloth (a ritual gift meant for mothers) from the boys, all the women left. From then on, the men's camp was set up elsewhere, and again became forbidden to access for women. If, during the whole duration of the cycle, women spoke of their impatience to regain their sons, they spoke with no less anticipation of the gifts they were to receive on the same occasion.

It now is common for hair strings to be accompanied with cloth because such pieces of material are today substituted for the strings. For instance, at healing rituals performed by the Walpiri women, the healers are paid with cloth; traditionally, they would have been paid with hair strings. Perhaps this substitution is because the hair strings were practically the only clothing of the desert Aborigines. Since these strings, being made from hair, are detached from the body in order to attach people, cloth and clothes can be easily related to this function.

The metaphor of the detached that attaches is an analogy of a child-mother relationship. A child is detached from its mother at birth, a boy is once again symbolically detached at initiation, and a girl during growth ceremonies. Being detached allows people to be attached through marriage to the people of his or her spouse. Hair string or cloth, as a piece of clothing, is to the individual who wears it what a mother is to her child during pregnancy. A pregnant mother's womb is for the child what clothing is for a body. Similarly, what a mother is to a young child, a group is to its members; both are linked through kinship during their entire lives. If clothing also covers, hides or prevents from seeing, then we can say that clothing is both the symbol of alliance bonds between men and of their need for physical separation into autonomous entities. It is also important to consider the value men and women place on the hair strings. They are given by the men of a patriclan to the mothers of future initiated boys, who later become members of their territorial patriclan cult (male lodge). The strings thereby represent a ritual and socially determinant recognition of women's contribution to the male transmission of patriclan responsibilities.

To recapitulate briefly, women ritually manage their husbands' sisters in their ceremonies, and men's ceremonies would be meaningless without women's ceremonies—just as owner's ceremonies would be meaningless without the managers. In short, women, as managers, are vital for their husbands' territory celebration by men. Sisters-in-law managing ceremonies is, from the point of

view of classificatory kinship, a management conducted by symbolic "mothers" of the owners' patriclan. This means that women managers and those women whose ceremonies are managed are mutually identified with the potential life forces of the patriclan's mythical heroines. (These heroines are often not of the patriclan but "wives" or "mothers" of the patriclanic heroes celebrated by men). It is plausible to suggest that the value attached by women to the hair strings they receive from their husband (or from the men of his patriclan) does not spring from the fact that these strings represent an identifying link with potential mythical heroines, classificatory sisters of their husband or of their sisters-in-law whose ceremonies they manage. What is important is that there is a symbolism of value which is transmitted to women at the symbolic death of their sons. Following this event, they never again receive these value symbols from men. However, the women are vital for the transmission of this value from their brothers to their husbands and to supply this value (by cutting their own hair and making the strings) to their mothers' brothers. The circulation of this essential exchange value appears to symbolize women's independence with regard to men and the men's dependence on women. In fact, men need women's hair, and women, in order to be able to transmit hair between men, while women have no need of men's hair. The only case when they receive it is on the occasion of a ritual contract between a woman and her husband's patriclan concerning a male child, a future value producer. The value here refers to the alliances the boy will make through his kinship; it is precisely an alliance value that hair strings represent. Expressed differently, a woman does not depend on men unless she has agreed to give a son to her husband. For giving up her independence she is compensated with hair strings. But, because it is women who control reproduction, they win over their independence by the privilege of this control. It is important to remember that women without sons, even sterile women, are not unappreciated among the Walpiri. In fact, their classificatory kinship system makes all women collective "mothers" of a group of sons.

The importance of hair strings transmission among the Kaitish and the Aranda for marking kinship relations was noted by Spencer and Gillen (1904) who observed that in both groups it takes place among people who are linked by marriage. In the case of a man this occurs through his wife, and in the case of a woman this occurs through her husband or her daughter. However, among the Kaitish, it is the brother of the husband's mother who is important, while among the Aranda it is the husband's patriline that counts. As for territorial ceremonies, the Kaitish practice ritual management but the Aranda do not. This explains why the brother (ritually managed in his ceremonies) of a mother of either a man or a woman is so important among the Kaitish. He receives the alliance symbol because he is attached by the spouse who benefits from this alliance. Kaitish women can give their hair to their daughters' husbands, thereby giving back what this husband gives their brothers. This is of great importance for the mother-in-law and son-in-law relationship. The ritual bringing together of the mother-in-law, the son-in-law, and the spouse's mother's brothers by means of hair transmission emphasizes the fact that a mother's brothers represent her and her interests and that she has certain responsibilities with regard to alliances. This coincides with Hamilton's (1979) interpretation of marriage, not as an exchange between men with women being simple manipulated objects of circulation, but, as an exchange between a woman and a man; a mother-in-law and her son-in-law.

For the Aranda, the mother's brother is not prominent; nevertheless, the mother-in-law and son-in-law relationship is still meaningful because a woman also gives her hair to her daughter's husband to symbolize that it is through her that the alliance is held together. A man gives his hair to his wife's father or brother. The absence of a management system of the mother's brother is here

replaced by help given to the wife's clan; a woman's father and brothers are attached to her husband by her mother.

The Walpiri, Kaitish, and Aranda examples show complex symbolisms of value circulation at work, as if life reproduction and social reproduction were cycled by this image of the detached—hair cut as an analogy with the separation of the dead from the living group—to be attached once again to recirculate in an exchange that allows the forming of alliances. Hair strings circulation is not just a simple compensation, it is the actual guarantee of life. Men or women rely on these strings to link them with specific kinship or territorial groups, which may vary for each group and for different circumstances. A death is indeed an occasion for cutting the hair, but the hair strings also are circulated systematically within the same kinship group in circumstances other than the mourning period.

CONCLUSION

Hair strings maintain sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, and spouses symbolically alive, whether they are living or dead. It is evident that women play an essential role in this symbolic perpetuation which is vital to the society. Throughout their lives, women make strings from their hair more often than do men and transmit them to men so that the latter can use them in their exchanges with other men. The ethnographic evidence makes it apparent that women's place and participation in the symbolic dynamics of social reproduction is essential. On the one hand, it is their hair—cut when someone dies—that is mostly used for string-making and for circulation between men as an exchange value. On the other hand, these strings are made by the women themselves. With these strings, women are responsible for symbolically compensating (on the occasion of a death) and for attaching their brothers to their maternal uncles, and this relationship between a man and his maternal uncle corresponds to his role in ritual management, which is indispensable for land ownership.

On another level, hair string transmission between men occurs through women as the sisters. This transmission is reciprocal between brothers-in-law to symbolize compensating or attaching sisters with the brother or a husband. A woman shares with her brothers the ownership of the patriclan territory and at the same time she is a ritual manager of her husband's sisters' territorial ceremonies; these latter share with their brothers the ownership of their own, and different, patriclan territory. Hair strings circulation thus symbolizes alliances and economic exchanges (access to another person's territorial resources), affirms a certain dependence of men on women, and confirms women's responsibility not only as land owners or managers but also as producers of the value (hair strings made from their hair) which incarnates the ritual management relations.

NOTES

1. We can assume that the Walpiri recognition of the importance and power of women occurs with other aboriginal groups. Their strategic political significance for land control lies in the relationship between women and their sisters-in-law in a spiritual context. This was observed very early by Parker (1905) for the Euahlayi tribe in New South Wales, where "sisters-in-law/spirits" are those who bestow gifts relating to the resource-providing land.
2. I was able to note that this language is used to "speak" of sacred, secret things but also for gossip and to calm anger. Often women on the point of arguing would suddenly stop speaking and continue communicating through gestures. We could perhaps interpret the use of this language as a means of controlling different emotions.
3. In the case of a woman whose mother is deceased, it is the closest female relative of the mother's subsection who inherits.
4. Hamilton (1979) makes a similar interpretation from the fact that young boys and girls at women's secret ceremonies (*Bidjandjara*) see their mothers manipulate sacred phallic objects. This vision suggests an unconscious level of women's androgenic power.
5. Pidgin English word for "women in charge of rituals".
6. Pieces of cotton cloth of any color obtained from a city or settlement stores.

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