

KINSHIP AND FAMILY GENEALOGY

Defining the genealogy and kinship of the Parpars was not easy, starting with the factor of bigamy that distinguishes all families in the clan. Outlining a definitive pattern is impossible, counting that the Parpars are always looking for new stimuli. However, I was able to draw up a basic unit of the family unit of these communities and define a correlation between ancient and close relatives.

Parpars are very secretive about their lineage and emotional ties. We saw in the previous chapter that bigamy is widespread among them. Alongside the "biological" family then Mother-Father-Son is a "surrogate mother" a second wife as we acolytes might call her.

The father, since the definition of that word cannot be given in the absence of sonship, often has one woman he loves more than the other: this depends on several factors that are really too

personal and intimate to define in a total and general way.

The second wife (Whore or surrogate mother or second mother) serves almost as the servant of the household, as is the case with the Samu-Serah. An ugly thing to say, but real for these populations: the second woman is almost a bonus that the father gets through the passage of other men or to have more offspring and increase his kinship.

Relations between the biological mother's children and the surrogate mother are often stormy: they do not see eye to eye with her, much less interact with her. They insult her and sometimes yell at her, behavior that her father does not deny.

The relationship with the birth or biological mother is more understanding: between women they understand each other better, and she is often helped with keeping the hut tidy, working the garden where present or with everyday chores.

The same relationship between the children of the birth mother and those of the surrogate is complex and varied. In some families they tolerate

each other while in others they are constantly fighting. There is rivalry between them, often to prove to the father that they are the best or that the birth mother is better than the other.

This competition becomes insane or degenerates into fights between the boys, sometimes very dangerous for the health of the family group. These are common things among Parpars, but very strange to me: at least the first few times I saw them with my own eyes. The level of malice that shone through their eyes was almost deep hatred.

There is no reason why this animosity toward the second mother is real: one could easily live in harmony, trying to accept each other and be together, but it seems that the Parpars do not accept this. Precisely because they believe the surrogate wife corrupted the father just as Korakkan did with Musheen.

In Parpar bigamy the family structure is very rigid, but not hierarchical like that of the Onnah. If we analyze the relationships between the members we will understand that cohabitation is difficult, somewhat unstable: so much so that in

certain contexts it breaks down and the second wife may even ask to leave.

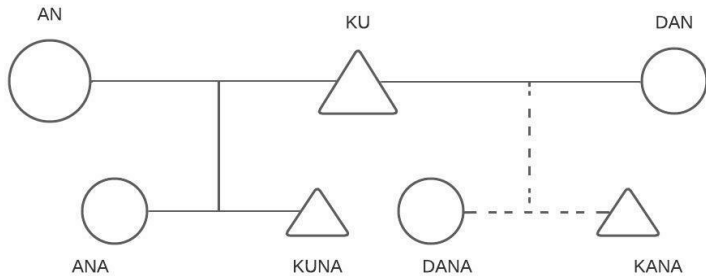
This decision is up to the husband, who can decide whether to let her go or give her up to another man. The ties between families are complex, almost a continuous guerrilla warfare between members of the two cores. Fights are frequent and confrontations almost always end with a death on either side. A special situation there is in the competitiveness between cousins, which we will see to be very passionate and sanguine.

*Let us now see how the minimum Parpar unit, namely the family, is structured. Next to the father (Ku) stands the biological or natural mother (An) and the surrogate wife (Dan). The children of Ku and An take a unique name in the Parpar dialect: sons will be **Kuna** and daughters **Ana**. This concerns the relationship with the natural mother, the one most loved by the children as the bearer of life and wisdom.*

The relationship between Ku and Dan, then with the second wife, may or may not bear children.

This depends solely on the will of the father and some advice from the shaman. There are precise predictions to be made before fathering a child with his surrogate wife: hearing the advice of Musheen and Parpar, contemplating the bowels of the great horn, and performing many small rituals that include lighting candles and singing hoarse songs.

*If the father decides to have children with his second wife, then they will be named as **Dana** if they are female and **Kana** if they are male. The relationship between Kuna/Kana and Ana/Dana is that of first cousins. They compete with each other to earn their father's love and often fight for trivial reasons. They live in the same house, but always in a threatening way and with an air of discontent.*



In addition to these relationships that make up the minimum unit of the Parpar household, there are other designations that individuals in the household take on, in perspective of who we are talking about or referring to.

To better explain these connections of the minimal unit or atom of kinship, we will need to see the different perspectives of the family, keeping in mind the considerations they have of each other. These relationships are accepted by Parpars but there are several exceptions, especially between first cousins, which we will see below.

We can thus divide the respective family roles, with a name often being composed and distinguished by mythology and clan or community usage.

- *Dan (surrogate wife) will call the first wife's child **Danakkan** i.e. stepson (either male or female), respectively the stepson will call the surrogate mother by the appellation **Kukkadan** i.e. the "mother whore."*
- *Dana (Dan's daughter) will call his biological wife by the name **Parpan** (surrogate mother of father), respectively she will call Dana by the name **Pardana** (with both male and female valence).*

The relationship between first cousins is more complex and sometimes not even that clear: Parpars use structures that sometimes deviate from the one I have outlined. This happens because of dialects and derogatory or appreciative forms. It also depends on some language roots that were lost after the great Marshu split. I will

use in this differentiation the term of "legitimate" related to the first wife and "illegitimate" related to the surrogate wife.

- *Kuna (legitimate male child) will call the illegitimate daughter Dana by the appellation **Danpar** (Cousin/sister). Inversely, the term that is used is **Kunpar** (Cousin/brother).*
- *Among same-sex cousins, there are certain terms that emphasize the contempt they feel for each other. It will be called **Danakkar** (Impure Sister) Ana's vision of Dana, thus the legitimate daughter versus the illegitimate daughter. She will take the name **Anakkar** (impure cousin) as the vision that Dana (illegitimate daughter) has with respect to Ana (legitimate daughter).*
- *Last, among males, the legitimate son will remain **Kunpar** (impure brother) while, inversely, the term the illegitimate son takes on is **Kunakkar** (impure cousin).*

We see that the entanglements between cousins become complex and take on sometimes conflicting valences. The first question I asked myself is the difference between unclean sister/brother and unclean cousin. A very thin line divides the two definitions, a detail that the Parpars consider crucial.

Each son/daughter of the two mothers considers himself/ herself the rightful heir of the father and tends to discredit the cousins. Dana's children tend to regard cousins as Impure, that is, not of the family: with dirty blood. So do the children of An whom they call unclean brother or sister precisely because they were born outside the traditional family, thus excluding the surrogate mother: they still consider cousins as such and are also often called cousin/brother or cousin/sister.

This tends to create strong disagreements in the parental atom, which is often forced to change in order to subsist.

The father may decide to name his children as stepchildren or natural children. The authority of the father is unquestionable, there are no special

designations in family relations, always Ku remains: meaning, in Parpar language, progenitor or patron.

These definitions may appear to be just words on a tree, but they divide the house into many microsystems that need continuous movement for them to remain balanced. These are words also routinely used in speeches, if we are talking about the daughter of the second wife then we will call him Dana. If we talk about the second wife, Dan and so on. People have names, but when it comes to family we tend to use the branches of genealogy.

So do the Kunuk and Onnah, for example. This view gives an entirely normal explanation for the organizational system of any society: even we when talking to relatives call them uncle or cousin and not by their first name, this when addressing someone who does not know them.

Language structure tends to fluctuate with respect to family ties, often using abbreviations or several words joined together. The meanings

crowd together, also creating long words that are uttered with an alternating cadence.

Again, as in all communities of the Parpar tribe, the relationships between the husband's and wife's families remain captive in the network of the Samu-Serah. This entails some limitations, but it also facilitates families by removing them from having to perform certain duties.

Let us start by saying that illegitimate sons and daughters can also contract unions with legitimate children of other families. A surrogate wife's child can marry an Ana from another family, not without some rites to be performed as soon as possible. In these situations, the second wife ends up becoming part of the spouse's family and thus is treated less impertinently than in her own household.

Just as a Kana or a Dana can marry an Ana and a Kuna from another family, respectively, legitimate children can also join together, forming a "pure" or "legitimate" nucleus by letting Dana and his children continue to be cousins of both each other.

It also happens, not so rarely, that people marry among cousins: a Kana may marry a Dana and thus remain in the Ku lineage. Often these events give the surrogate mother a place almost equivalent to An's and thus enhance the relationship and fortify the family unit.

But let's see what debts two spouses contract and what rites are connected to them. In the Morg clan, one of many in the Parpar tribe, they often bond with women from the Gorg clan and vice versa.

This is because Gorg and Morg are territorial neighbors and share the use of some property and the worship of some other sons of Musheen. They are descended from and practice the art of cultivation and gardening, which was passed on to man by Barbar, another figure also greatly adored by the Kunuk tribe. Taking care of the garden, the vegetable garden, growing plants, and growing fruits and vegetables is fundamental in family relationships.

Let us start by defining the debts that a woman (Ana) encounters by joining the Kuna of a

household B. To sanction this union, first of all, it will be necessary to call the shaman who, after an exchange of jokes with the Ku of each household, will begin to bless the land of the future home of the couple. He fertilizes the ground so that everything will grow abundantly: he treads the earth as if he had hooves and, with the thick-horned headdress, he sanctions Musheen's protection over that land.

At the end of this ritual, not very complex but full of formulas and chants, the two will meet a debt of threefold magnitude: one to the Ku of their respective families and a third to the shaman and the village.

The Morg divide debts into four categories:

- 1. The KUs of families, to whom we owe gratitude and perseverance in growing and keeping the family strong*
- 2. The shaman officiating the rites and performing the blessing in the name of the ancestors and Musheen.*
- 3. To the village that gives this new couple a place to live*

4. *At An of the two families, having given birth to the children who later matched*
5. *Toward the ancestors, Morg or Gorg, for the abundance and certainty of having a family*
6. *Here's to nature bearing the fruits that man needs to survive.*

These are the individuals to whom the two will owe debts that will last throughout their lives. We are not talking about money, but about a kind of gratitude that gives these individuals the right to demand something in return.

To pay off these debts, the two will have to work the garden and keep it clean at all times. Produce many vegetables and bring the fruit to families when ripe, take care of the house and display ritual objects in the house, where the fullness of the environment is represented in contrast to the emptiness of the universe.

They would seem to be easily payable debts, simple things that are part of all the lives of families in the community. There may be cases

where family struggles make this daily balance difficult.

The shaman has a duty to monitor the couple and observe if any tabu is violated or if the garden is not well kept. In this way he takes on the role of Barbar, who observes whether the seeds are planted well and whether they bear good fruit.

The homemade ritual objects, called Wa'robi, are small figurines depicting Barbar and small polished wooden horns related to the figure of Parpar. There are objects of protection from evil, some kind of dangling sticks that sound when they collide with each other or shells that are beaten when a breath of wind brushes against them.

Parpar clans believe in evil, believe in evil spirits and see them as aphids or bugs that get under the skin to kill the organism. They are the N'patoh we mentioned in the introduction: negative essences of reality that threaten the quiet life of the village.

These entities are very distinct from the Palomu, who are widespread in the Gorg, Morg and Semnghe clans. These Palomu are nothing but the reflection of the dead coming back to visit the

living. When a person dies, the essence must be able to pass through that barrier formed by the N'patoh. If he fails to do so, he risks becoming part of it. This occurs in the most common funeral ritual, when burying the body.

The Morg believe that after burial the dead person's essence ends up on an island where he or she dwells until he or she reaches spiritual death. This essence, if we want to call it a ghost, is manifested in the reflected figure of the Palomu: it is often noises, voices, or movements that human eyes can catch in passing.

There are many testimonies that ascertain, according to communities, the existence of these spirits. They visit families and walk around the huts, being careful not to be seen or heard.

The Palomu die again and become part of the void, making way for the full with a new birth or so say the Parpar. When a child is born a Palomu dies and is gone for good. What island they dwell on is not entirely clear to me: perhaps a small clump of land in the sea, north of Eban-Rad.

Palomu are not evil entities, but they are destined to wander for a time in the world of the living. This makes them restless and pawing. In the above-mentioned funeral ceremonies, there is no cognizance of the essence returning among mortals. Only a few clans believe this and they are viewed with great distrust.

It is also believed that these Palomu manifest themselves to man by entering the elements or certain objects, made specifically to accommodate them. An important and also very beautiful object both stylistically and decoratively are the vases found at the foot of the Morg huts. In the Parpar language they are called Wa'sebi, meaning containers. Inside them the entity can hide and protect the lives of families until the end of its cycle.

It is believed that these vessels are sacred and if broken out of spite will unleash the wrath of the Palomu, bringing terror and famine upon the village.

Different case if a Dana marries a Kuna or vice versa. As she is the children of the surrogate

mother, to join her in marriage, the Kuna will have to buy her love. Here the "bride price" that is, that agreement between families to surrender the girl to her betrothed and integrate her into his family, comes to light again.

In this case, Dana is bought by Kuna and becomes part of her family: she lives and eats with them, lives in their hut and cultivates their garden.

Usually this price is sanctioned by the Ubabah (the shaman) who discharges any debt in exchange for a small price for the woman's family. They are usually exchanges of religious objects or tools for working the land. They also exchange food or flour, rice and dairy products. The price is set by the shaman speaking on behalf of the Kuna family.

It may seem unfair, but these traditions are widely accepted and provide mutual benefits: on the one hand, the woman enters a different family and will be able to conceive and become a mother. From the other, the husband's family, you get various items that serve the normal of life of each Parpar.

Remember that love is not imposed, only the woman's transition from her family to her husband's.

In this situation, one of the few, all debts are discharged. In this case the Palomu are present at the exchange and settlement of the price, in the form of small wooden figurines, as tall as a human leg. They are exchanged along with the rest so that they can control the lives of their respective families.

When we talk about control we are talking about surveillance, not possession. I am compelled to point this out because we will see a case of possessive control when we discuss the Mommels and ritual statuettes.