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Wedding categories

Kinship and village weddings in Finland and Thailand

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Public manifestations for future. In this writing I consider culture as human activity, directed at creation and maintenance of a secure future in a constantly changing environment. Man has had his own position (niche), whence he views his environment and creates his life choices, his environmental strategy (cf. D'Andrade 1997. Shore 1999), but the real environment of cultures has been continuous change, and man has not been able to adapt to some existing state, but to a future that is within sight.

Marriage has been legalized by making public the union between the man and woman and the setting up of a new family in the community of which they are members (e.g. James 1955; Mair 1974). Entering into marriage in public has legitimized the status of the new family and given its children legal rights to their parents' family inheritance. Cultural anthropology emphasized exchanging of reciprocal gifts; the marriage contract would have been sealed above all by exchange of gifts, for example by members of both kinship groups (Comarof 1980). However, the essence of the matter is that the gifts have been given and received in a public ceremony, such as a wedding. Married persons have been distinguished from the unmarried by signs that are publicly visible, a wife's headdress or jewellery that the unmarried were not permitted to wear.

In preference to ethnographic categorization, I have used two classifications of weddings: kinship weddings and village weddings (e.g. 1969; 1981 and Folklore Atlas 1995; 2000 maps 9-21). The categorization is based on the community within which the marriage is enforced, to whom the wedding drama is performed, and how the security of the young couple's future is ensured in different communities. The purpose of marriage was to safeguard a secure future of the community members. Particularly in agrarian societies, marriage has been predestined to be for life. The family was a unit of survival, and when marriages were sealed, the community, kinship group or village, had to ensure that the new married couple and their future children would cope in the shared environment, that the marriage was happy and reproduction of the kinship group would continue, from one generation to the next. From the point of view of kinship groups and village communities of past times, it has been important that the marriage was a long-term, lifelong relationship, and evidently the permanent and unique nature of marriage in human life has been emphasized by making marriage a particularly solemn and prominent rite of passage.

Rituals for publicity. A common definition of a wedding is that it is a public enforcement of marriage. Weddings have included many ceremonies through which the new marriage was declared to the community: a public proposal of marriage, public exchange of gifts, public giving away of the bride and transfer to her new membership group, public escorting of the young couple to the wedding bed, dressing of the bride as wife, etc. Weddings have included public processions, such as a wedding cortege, processions of wedding guests and parading of the dowry.

In ancient Scandinavian kinship society, giving away of the bride was made public. It happened in the presence of witnesses on some public occasion, such as a market (Carlsson 1965; 1969). At the same time, a symbolic sheath proposal may have been performed, a custom that has been preserved in Eastern Finland, albeit with a different meaning (Sarmela 1969, 64-; 2000, maps 9-10). Even today, it is customary at a wedding ceremony for the bride's father to give away his daughter to the groom, in a way publicly handing her over from his own family. When the Catholic church took control of enforcement of marriages (officially in 1563), the order was also made that the banns for the young couple had to be read in church before the wedding (Heikinmäki 1981, 157-. Kuuliala 1958. Sarmela 1969, 94-). The banns have had two purposes. One was to ensure that neither of the prospective marriage partners had any impediments to marriage, but in village communities where people's background was general knowledge, the more important function was making the young couple's intention public; the banns might have been read on up to three Sundays, as in the Lutheran church.

In the Middle Ages in Sweden-Finland, priests were present at the giving away of the bride and taking her to the wedding bed, blessing the wedding chamber and the marriage bed. After the Reformation, the Lutheran church also ordered church marriage to become mandatory (1686 Church Act) and adopted the practice of also allowing marriage ceremonies at home. Thus, consecration of the marriage became the most spectacular ceremony of the wedding, so-called 'crown weddings' evolved around a home wedding ceremony, becoming village community feasts lasting several days in the 1800s and early 1900s.

Public escorting of the young couple to the marriage bed at the wedding has been a common custom in agrarian cultures around the world. This custom is based on ideas of the point at which marriage between a man and woman finally begins (Nieminen 1951, 1991). Moral codes of high religions have included the requirement of pre-marital chastity, and in European agrarian societies, too, the bride had to be a virgin. Virginity of the bride was also made public in the wedding ceremonies. Only virgin brides were permitted to bear the wedding crown, and in rural communities of Western Finland (Pylkkänen 1953; 1964. Tommila 1965). The bride's virgin status and its loss have

also been disclosed on the morning after the wedding night, for example while drinking the *huomentuoppi* (morning tankard; Heikinmäki 1981, 504-. Ylikangas 1967. CF. Mahler 1960, 371-. Piprek 1914, 133). A Christian wedding enforced and consecrated the marriage, but only the first sexual union made it final and irrevocable.

1. Constructing future in the kinship weddings

Thai kinship marriage

Turn out the light and be married. A few decades ago, Thai villages still maintained the custom of boys visiting girls' houses in the evenings; the custom is reminiscent of boys' nocturnal visits in Finland and agrarian villages in other European countries (Sarmela 2004, 129-; 2005 II, 55-). Visits were also made to nearby villages, although often boys would try to expel the visitors from their own village. Having found a girl he liked, the boy would visit her more and more often, finally every night. In testing out each other's feelings, the young people would use symbolic idioms and 'poetic language'; verbal ability was valued, as was skill at work. During the evening visits, the boy would watch how the girl did her chores, and may have participated in some jobs himself, such as cleaning vegetables. The young people were under strict supervision by the girl's parents. Absolute moral norms prevailed in Buddhist villages of Thailand, in common with European Christian agrarian villages of the past. Villagers say that the girl and boy were not even permitted to touch each other, as the supernatural guardian of the house would have become angry. Here, the supernatural guardian represented the girl's ancestors; in Thai villages, as in Finland, the deceased have watched over the morality of their kinship group.

The courtship was long, up to two years, so the village was aware of who were courting. When the young people decided to get married, the boy did not return home for the night, but stayed at the girl's house overnight. After a short time the girl's parents visited the boy's home to request that he should remain with them. After this, the young people

were deemed to have become married, and the union was confirmed by reciprocal visits. The boy's parents visited the girl's home and brought along symbolic gifts to reinforce the durability of the link between the families and the young couple's happiness in married life; in swidden villages, the gift was a pig's head and a bunch of cloves. The girl's parents returned the visit to the boy's home, and the young wife herself would visit her husband's home a few times. To show her willingness to serve her parents-in-law, she would fill up the water containers in the house and receive a little cash in return.

So, the formal proposal was made by the girl's parents (mother). This was because in northern villages, as well as largely elsewhere in Thailand, daughters remained at home after marriage and the husband moved in as son-in-law; the uxorilocal form of residence of the married couple has remained to the present time. Sisters of the compound formed a strong matrifocal family community, which provided mutual support in all issues important from the family point of view. If the marriage of a daughter failed, her husband had to leave. In the past, every son-in-law had to build his own house in his wife's compound, in order to claim his place among other sons-in-law and village husbands, only then was the marriage considered confirmed. The short formula for entering marriage was that the girl's mother called to ask for the boy for her son-in-law, and when the boy arrived and built a house, the young couple was married and could start their own family.

Background of Thai kinship weddings. In the era of kinship communities, the marriage was not disclosed to the village community, the kinship wedding was modest, and the common get-together was usually attended only by the young couple's parents. The reciprocal visits between the families were also conducted clandestinely. Arrival of the son-in-law in the house was only announced to the supernatural guardian of the compound, who in the past represented the ancestor of the matrilineal line and all the deceased who (before cremation became customary) were interred near the house. The ancestors had to be informed that there was now a new member in the family who would continue the line. Similarly, the guardian of the kinship group was told of the births of children. From the local community point of view, the crucial issue in legitimizing the marriage was the approval before too long of the new son-in-law by the wife's (elder) sisters, brothers and other members of the immediate community. The modest nature of the marriage ceremony was probably due to the matrifocality of the form of residency, and the fact that the son-in-law entered the household for a kind of trial period, attaining the status of the head of his family only when he had built his house and in general proved his ability to take care of his family. On the other hand, courtships of young people were public and villagers were aware of boys' visits from the outset.

Thai kinship weddings had adapted to a social environment where life was focused on the family compound, and private land ownership was unknown. Even in the 1970s, there were still compounds in plains villages inhabited by up to a dozen sibling families; most of the wives were sisters. Arrival of a husband in the home of his wife was not cause for dramatization in the same way as transfer of a bride in the kinship wedding. The groom moved into his bride's home and made public his arrival by farming the land his wife's family customarily farmed, and by building a house for his family. It was not necessary for the groom to pay for anything, and he generally brought into the house nothing other than his clothes and personal effects. When selecting a spouse, the most important criteria were that the boy was of good character, that he was hard-working and capable of the work of the rice farmer; boys were able to prove their endeavour towards an honourable life by serving as monks in the village temple over at least one fast.

Karelian kinship wedding

Formula of kinship wedding. In Karelian kinship communities, marriage has been an event between two kinship groups, and the wedding ceremony focused on transferring the bride from her own family to the groom's extended family. Ancient Karelian kinship weddings, so-called song weddings, have included all the stages of transferring the bride, the classic formula of a rite of passage has been evident in detail in them, as well as the ways of validating the marriage between the two kinship groups. All the stages of the wedding had their own wedding songs in archaic metre, the wedding actors, performers of set lines and dialogic songs were representatives of the groom's and bride's kinship groups; only the sorcerer and performer of laments might have been outsiders. Some have estimated that Karelian and Ingrian weddings may have included 60-70 songs in archaic metre led by skilled singers, and dozens of laments. Wedding songs progressed in dialogic form, starting with a question and response lines; their structure was the same as those used in bear rites of the hunting era. (Sources: Alava 1908. Bogdanov 1930. Harva 1929; 1940-1941. Ilomäki 1989. Inha 1910. Kuusi 1963. Manninen 1932. Nenola-Kallio 1981. Pentikäinen 1971. Salminen 1916a,b; 1917. Sarmela 1969; 1978a,b; 1981; 1995; 2000. Surhasko 1977. Virtaranta 1958. Armstrong 2004. Fortes 1962.)

From the beginning, the parties of marriage ceremonies were two kinship groups. The party setting out to propose to a girl included the boy's parents, along with other representatives of the kinship group, and the girl's aunts, uncles and other important relatives would always be invited to the occasion of the proposal. The proposal was a lengthy

negotiation between two kinship groups, and if the proposal was accepted, the parties agreed on the bridal fee or dowry (head money) and betrothal fee or a forfeit which the party breaching the agreement would have to pay, and validated their marriage agreement with a handshake; from that moment the girl was betrothed or promised away.

The actual wedding was divided in three main phases: 1. departure of the bride (separation stage), 2. escort of the bride (liminal stage, journey) and 3. arrival or bride's reception ceremony at the groom's home (aggregation stage). The departure in particular was a women's rite with its separation songs and laments. The leaving party dramatized separation of the betrothed from her own home, family and the carefree life of an unmarried girl. Transportation of the bride, the wedding procession, was a marginal or liminal stage, during which the bride was socially insecure or outside structures; she had been detached from her former status, but not yet attached to her new peer group and cultural position. At the reception party, the bride was irrevocably received by the groom's kinship group, as daughter-in-law of the extended family.

Above all, the wedding was a women's drama, with a message that served to reinforce social structures of extended families. Like the Thai compound, the extended family has been a strong women's group. Wedding songs were sung by women, and wedding laments were wholly a women's tradition. Women were assigned to receive processions, give presents, dress the bride and other duties. In the past, women of the kinship group brokered marriages, with the girl's mother, aunts and godmother the chief negotiators at the proposal. At the wedding, the betrothed was met by the mother-in-law and the community of the women of the extended family. Men, even the groom, played a minor part, and at weddings only the advent of the sorcerer with his agrarian rites provided competition for the women.

All in all, weddings were therapy for women. At the departure and reception, the bride was subjected to separation rites and prepared for her new status. Women of the kinship community defused their memories, hopes and disappointments with her. Along with agrarization, women's songs and lamenting at kinship weddings have increased; separation rites increasingly clearly defused the fears girls felt when having to become daughters-in-law in extended families that were becoming hierarchical and patriarchal. Wedding songs originated from the era of hunting economy and swidden culture, when women dominated the extended family, the everyday culture of the kinship community, and also age-related rites from birth to death. At weddings and funerals, women had the opportunity of expressing their emotions – they served as interpreters of life feelings of their community and creators of atmosphere. They could weep out the fatality and irrevocability signified to a human being by passage from one life stage to another.

Basic formula of Karelian song wedding**Bride's home**

1. Bridal sauna

Groom's home***I. Evening of departure of groom's folk***

1. Sauna of the bridegroom

Leaving song

Bathing song

Dressing song

Song for the journey (incantation)

II. Departure ceremony at bride's home

2. Arrival of groom's folk

Arrival song

Reception song

3. Viewing of groom

Groom's eyes

Tracking of the maiden

Hand striking song

5. Exchange of kinship gifts

6. Dressing of betrothed

Song for tying the head

The groom awaits

Dressing song

Leaving song

7. Giving away of the betrothed

Giving away words

Words to young wife

Words of marriage conditions

III. The escort of bride

- 8. Protection rites of the escort
Protection words (incantation)

IV. Arrival at groom's home

- 9. Reception ceremony
 - Sister's song*
 - Reception of young wife*
- 10. Viewing of young wife
 - Waiting for the young wife*
- 11. Arrival feast
 - Praise of groom*
 - Songs in praise of kinship group*
 - Songs to teach the young bride*

Bride's departure. Immediately after the proposal, the bride started collecting bridal aid from her relatives for the reciprocal gifts to be distributed to the groom's relations during the wedding ceremony. The night before the leaving party (the shoeing evening), the bride was separated from her unmarried girl friends, her childhood pals, who prepared the wedding sauna (*neitsytkyly* 'virgin's bath') for her (e.g. Ojajärvi 1959). Similarly on the groom's side, members of his kinship group gathered on the night before the wedding, and the preparations included bathing of the groom in the sauna, and in the era of sorcerers, preparation rites complete with incantations. The songs *Bathing song* and *Dressing song* belonged in the groom's bathing in the sauna, progressing as a dialogue between the groom and his mother. In *Bathing song*, the groom asks his mother to heat up the sauna, fetch water and make soap, for him to wash his hair. The mother responds by urging her son to cast his childhood onto the seating platforms of the sauna, to take responsibility for his new status. In the lines of *Dressing song*, the son asks his mother to bring his festive shirt, embroidered cloak or fur coat, belt with gold decoration etc. In the response lines, the mother stresses the family value of the clothing: the shirt she sewed herself as a young maid, the cloak is one worn by the boy's father when he was a groom (cf. Salminen, H-K 1943-1944).

Representatives of the groom's kinship group (*sulhas-* or *noutoväki*) were led by the sorcerer, and contained a group of the groom's relations: uncles, aunts, but also young men, at least the groom's brothers. At the bride's homestead, the visitors were received by the mistress of the house, the bride's mother, who performed *Arrival song* of the groom's folk. The principal role among the groom's group was held by *saajannainen*, usually the groom's aunt or an elder, married sister; she distributed the gifts of the groom's side and acted as the bride's assistant on the groom's home. On the side of the bride's family, her assistant was *kaaso* (matron of honour), her aunt or elder sister, whose duties included dressing the bride. The groom's arrival at the house was followed by viewing (*katsotus*) of the groom. He was placed behind a table for the bride's relatives to look over. Then the groom was permitted to meet his bride. *Kaaso* dressed the bride in a festive dress and covered her head with a kerchief, or a curtain was hung between the bride's kin and the groom's folk. When the groom had paid a viewing fee, the curtain hiding the bride was pulled aside and the groom was asked whether he still recognized his own. Evidently, the *Tracking of the maiden song* belonged in this juncture, with the bride's mother asking how the groom knew that there were maids of marriageable age in the house or how he tracked down the girl who was kept hidden in a remote cabin. The groom replies that smoke rising from the chimney in the early morning, sounds of hand grinding stones, the spindle or loom revealed

the hard-working girl. The song ends in the mother's line that a maid cannot be hidden from a hunter. *Tracking of the maiden* is grounded on metaphors of hunting culture, and it seems that the song has been part of Karelian wedding ceremonies in very early times.

In Viena Karelia, the viewing was followed by exchange of gifts (*vajehus*). On the groom's side, the gifts were distributed by *saajannainen*, on the bride's side by *kaaso*. The gifts were handed out individually to relations present, and the bride and groom also exchanged gifts, the bride usually giving the groom a shirt and receiving a skirt in return. Many changes have taken place in the exchange of gifts; at the end of the 1800s the groom's family replaced the gifts with money, but the bride's gifts were made by herself and retained their position as demonstrations of the skills of the new daughter-in-law. The ceremonies between the two kinship groups were often concluded by striking of hands which finalized the marriage, accompanied by *Hand striking song* or *Eagle song* (*Kokkovirsi*), as on the occasion of the proposal. The song likens the groom to an eagle soaring in the sky and striking on the most handsome bird in a flock of mallard ducks.

In the region where laments were preserved, Viena, Aunus and Ingria, the bride wailed her first separation laments, ritual wails, immediately at the proposal (Konkka 1985. Nenola-Kallio e.g. 1981). While collecting bridal aid, the bride also wailed her farewell laments to her relatives. At the farewell ritual (*läksiäiset*), performing of laments began in the morning. The bride's mother woke her daughter with a lament, and during the morning the bride wailed laments to her grandparents, parents, siblings and all relatives who had arrived for the event. It was credit to the bride if she was able to lament her own wedding, but usually the wedding laments were performed by a skilled old woman, *olallinen*. The bride and her assistants leaned on each other and walked to each person in turns, pressing their heads against their shoulders. The bride may go around the yard with *olallinen*, visiting the byre and other places; this way the bride bid farewell to the places that were an important part of her childhood. In the course of the wedding, the bride departed from the girl friends of her childhood, her family and kin, and all that had been part of her 'maiden life'. In Aunus Karelia, blessing of the bride (*turkillä prostitus*) was also a custom, with the bride kneeling in front of her parents on a pelt and asking forgiveness for any upset she may have caused them, and the parents blessed their daughter.

Escorting the bride. Before departure, the bride was dressed. In the head covering ceremony her hair was combed in the manner of married women, and a married woman's headdress placed on her head. The dressing was per-

formed by *kaaso*, but the bride's unmarried girl friends may also have taken part. While the bride's hair was being done, *Head covering song* was performed, and *Groom's waiting song*, asking the groom to wait patiently. The dressing ended to *Dressing song* describing item by item the bride's dress, how she is shod and mittens put on her hands.

When the bride was dressed, *Departure song* was sung, and the wedding party moved outdoors by the front steps. Outside, the bride's father gave away his daughter to the groom, reciting or singing *Giving away words* (Luovutus-sanat). They impress upon the daughter that she has made her decision and separated from her former home. If the marriage was dissolved and the girl forced to return, her status would no longer be the same: the threshold to the house would be higher by a beam and the yard smaller by a field's edge. Setting of marriage conditions (avioehto-asetus) has also been performed during the giving up of the bride, reminding the collecting folk that responsibility for the bride is transferred to the groom's kin, and that the young wife would be permitted to return home if she was ill-treated, and the groom was reminded that the bride's brothers would seek revenge if something untoward was to happen to their sister. In Karelian kinship society, the groom was also responsible for his bride to her brothers; especially the eldest brother had the duty to care for his siblings.

Arrival of bride. At the groom's house, the bride's escort was received in the yard, where the groom's younger, unmarried sister performed *Sister's song (Arrival song)*. In it, the groom's sister sings that the village has waited as if for a new moon, and no longer believed that the brother with his new wife would come. But she never lost faith that a hunter like her brother would come empty-handed, without a hunter's bag. In another version of the reception song, the escort folk arrive by boat with the bride herself at the oars, and the groom as cox. The song asks the bride to step off the boat and into the house.

The young couple was led indoors and seated behind a table; viewing of the young wife followed. The kerchief covering her face was lifted away, and the groom's relatives and villagers who had gathered for the occasion came forth to see the new daughter-in-law. At the arrival event, the young wife has distributed gifts to the groom's parents and those of her new relations who were not present on the occasion of her leaving. At this juncture, *Waiting song* was evidently sung to the new wife, describing how intently the groom's kin have waited for the new family member. They have ceaselessly looked out onto the lake; the eyes of old people have watered as they have looked out of windows, youngsters' feet have become sore from running along the lake path. The boat, water fowl metaphors and expectation of the hunter's bag would indicate that the arrival and waiting songs have a similar basic plot cultivating

hunting images as in the groom's leaving song and the hand striking song. Later versions of the waiting song describe how intently the groom's house has waited for the new worker, how the kitchen has waited for someone to sweep, wipe the table, and numerous other tasks for someone to undertake them. The young wife is brought in a horse-drawn sleigh, asked to alight and to step into the house built by the groom and his father, onto lands cleared by them. The song introduces a Karelian house room by room, domestic animal by domestic animal, and at the same time the duties of the mistress, and how necessary the new daughter-in-law is in the house.

Song praising the groom has also been one of the arrival songs. The older version praises the groom as hunter: a man who wanders the forests and wildernesses, with dogs that do not laze around at home; the groom rises in the morning from a campfire and his head is swept by spruce trees. A later version exalts the groom as swidden feller and plougher of fields, he has barley growing by ditches, heathland growing oats, and a granary at every clearing. The arrival occasion ended with a meal shared by both kinship groups, with the relations who had come as the bride's escort joining in on the bride's side. The feasting songs included songs of praise, with members of both families intent on competing with their songs, exalting their own kin and its members. At the arrival or the following day, the young wife was taken to the holy sites of the deceased of the kinship group, and the arrival of the new daughter-in-law was announced to the ancestors.

In agrarizing Karelia the arrival meal was transformed into a wedding feast, often lasting through the night, and later feasting songs have been so-called advisory songs, with detailed instructions to the young wife on how she should behave towards other members of the extended family and the mother-in-law in particular, and how the duties of the daughter-in-law should be discharged. The songs of this stratum dealt with the living environment of a farmer, and the old wedding songs began to die out.

2. Constructing security in the village weddings

Village wedding in Western Finland

Structural change of weddings. Transition from kinship communities to agrarian village communities coincided with a cultural structural change affecting all areas of living: work and livelihood, religion, world view, relationship with the environment and the future, as well as rites of passage, courtships of the young, marriage and celebrating weddings. Within agrarian culture of Western Finland, the wedding became a village community celebration, during which the young couple was transferred to the company of married villagers and the social status afforded to them. Village weddings no longer included poems in the archaic metre nor laments, but they were a joyous celebration where the village community gathered to eat, drink and dance. The village became involved in all stages of human life from birth to death. (About agrarian wedding: Heikinmäki 1981, 207-. Kaisla 1915. Knaapinen 1890. Sarmela 1969, 99-; 1977; 1978a,b; 1981c; 1995; 2000. Torppa 1915. Vilkuna, A. 1959. Vilkuna, K. 1950; 1956. von Schroeder 1882. Tedre 1973. Kalits 1988. Norlind 1919. Bringéus 1987. Bondeson 1988. Troels-Lund (1903-1904) 1938. Frimmanslund 1940. Espeland 1981. Hodne et al. 1985. Piprek 1914. Mahler 1960. Tsistov 1976; 1981. Bächtold 1914. Deneke 1971. Weber-Kellermann 1987. Remberg 1995. Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde II: 5-8,47.)

The wedding was held in the bride's home and a wedding altar was built for the occasion, comprising wedding stools upon which the bride and groom knelt, and a fabric wedding canopy (*tella*), which might also be a large silk kerchief held over the bridal couple by bridesmaids and groomsmen (Vilkuna, K. 1956). The bride was dressed in her wedding dress and a high crown decorated with gold and silver paper and glass beads placed on her head, giving weddings in Western Finland the name 'crown weddings' (Pylkkänen 1953; 1964. Tommila 1965). Instead of a home wedding, the couple may be wed in church, removing there from the wedding house in procession while musicians played wedding marches.

The wedding guests were received solemnly at the gate to the house, with the players playing arrival marches. Guests on the groom's side often assembled at the groom's house and walked from there in procession to the wedding house. The marriage ceremony was followed by the wedding meal and wedding toasts, with congratulations and speeches. Then the wedding dance began, culminating in removal of the wedding crown from the bride and leading of the newlyweds to the wedding bed. The next morning, *head covering* (päänpeitäjäiset) or drinking of

morning tankard (huomentuoppi) took place. The young wife's head was covered with the headdress of a married woman and a toast was drunk, after which the guests put money on a tray as a present to the young wife. One-day weddings ended with the leaving meal.

In agrarian communities of Western Finland the role players of weddings changed, relatives were left aside and replaced by villagers, neighbours and friends of the same age group. The groom's parents no longer went to make the proposal to the girl on behalf of their son, as was the custom in regions of kinship culture, but the spokesmen were outsiders, revered villagers. Gradually, the role of marriage brokers became professionalized; in Scandinavia and also in Finland, professional spokesmen also became masters of ceremonies at weddings (Granlund 1969. Espeland 1981). In Western Finland, *kaaso* was a professional dresser, who owned a wedding crown and dressed all the brides in the parish. Village weddings brought the occupation of musician to Finland (Ala-Könni 1956), and also of the other operators of wedding feasts; cooks, waitresses and fiddlers were semi-professionals, and the bridal couple's assistants, bridesmaids and groomsmen, may also be the bride's or groom's friends and no longer necessarily relatives. The musician acquired an increasingly central role in weddings in Western Finland, and finally directed the wedding ceremonies from start to finish. Musicians accompanied the wedding guests as they entered the house, sat down at the wedding table and drank toasts, and finally the musician played at the wedding dance, which went on late into the night.

From unmarried to married status. Within kinship culture, even the meeting of young people took place through mediation by kinship institutions. E.g. in Orthodox Karelia, girls were sent to visit their relatives, giving them the opportunity of meeting boys of the village (*ativoissa käynti*; Teräs vuori 1941.), or young people met at reciprocal kinship celebrations, *praasniekkas*, which were held on anniversaries of the village church patron saint. In Western Finland, village youngsters started organizing their own village dances ('corner dances') and other social occasions from the 1700s. In European village cultures, as in Thai villages, village boys' evening visits to girls' homes became a widespread custom (Wikman 1959. Sarmela 1969, 155-; 2000, maps 34-38). In Finland, particularly in Pohjanmaa, boys wandered around the village in groups and kept a vigilant watch over nightly interaction. They had their own initiation rites, leaders and other characteristics of organized groups, and they also made sure that boys from other villages did not secretly get to visit the girls; so-called village fights took place between gangs of boys, also an institution reinforcing the community spirit of villages.

Right up to the Second World War it was customary to hold a dance to finish off all village voluntary working parties

Basic formula of village wedding

Bride's home

1. Common preparation
 - Wedding working party
 - Decoration of wedding house

Wedding

3. Reception of guests
 - Arrival marches
4. Wedding ceremony
5. Wedding meal
6. Wedding toasts
7. Wedding dance
8. Escorting to bed

Second wedding day

9. Head covering
 - Toasting the future
10. Departure of wedding procession

Groom's home

1. Common preparation
 - Wedding working party
2. Departure of guests' procession

11. Reception of wedding procession
12. Meal
 - Drinks for the young couple
13. Dancing
 - Thanksgiving dances
14. Closing fare

and shared endeavours; annual celebrations included dances; young people danced at engagements, parties to celebrate the banns of the young couple and naturally also at weddings; in Karelian villages young people were allowed at all proposals between kinship groups for a dance. Youth culture was later continued by local associations, such as youth clubs. In the agrarian village community period, young people had the opportunity of getting to know their contemporaries in the area of all nearby villages and even the whole municipality.

In village communities of Western Finland, rites of passage were almost wholly focused on the young couple separating from the group of unmarried young adults, and the aggregation rites on admitting the couple into the group of village community members who had 'established a family', in Christian terminology 'matrimony'. Detachment from the group of young people began before the wedding at young women's evening sewing circles, where betrothed brides prepared their trousseaus, and continued at the engagement and banns dances. Remnants of old marriage customs are particularly stag and hen nights (Polterabend), separation celebrations, marking detachment of those about to marry from their contemporaries. Separation rites of young people included various procession ceremonies, such as reception of returners from a trip to the market to buy engagement gifts, and halting of the wedding procession. In European villages and also in Finland, it was customary for the groom's contemporaries to halt the wedding procession by placing barriers on the way and demanding alcoholic treats (Dünninger 1967). In Pohjanmaa young villagers stopped a couple returning together from a trip to buy their betrothal gifts, the 'engagement market'. The groom had to pay a forfeit to free himself from the friends of his youth, his former peer group. At village weddings, rites of passage encroached the dances themselves; the wedding ended with young men dancing in a 'ring' and married men in another, with the groom lifted up to join the married men (Vilkuna, A. 1959).

From community spirit to social hierarchy. Village weddings were originally community celebrations, which every villager could attend without invitation, and the arrangements for which were shared in one way or another by the neighbours or the whole village. In Pohjanmaa the neighbours brought foodstuffs to the wedding house, and preparation of the wedding fare was shared by the villagers, as was the case in Thailand. In village communities of Western Finland, contemporaries of the bride and groom decorated the wedding house as a working party, and erected festive gates where the wedding guests were received. The wedding room, where the ceremony itself was to take place, was hung with coverlets, wall hangings and sheets, and mirrors, garlands and floral decorations were affixed to the walls. The villagers helped the young couple in many ways. Before the wedding, the betrothed bride went around the village collecting bridal aid for making her trousseau; at the wedding toasts were drunk, for which

the guests reciprocated with a cash gift, with wealthy farmers even competing over who gave the most.

When village lands were divided into private ownership in Western Finland (from the 1750s) and gradually also in Eastern Finland, a class society based on land ownership and social class was born in rural villages. The peasant village community was divided into social classes, starting from estate owners and ending with the landless classes, crofters and agricultural labourers. Class divisions affected choice of marriage partner, all stages of entering into marriage, and also wedding customs.

Invitations were issued to weddings, and the lower social classes could no longer participate in land owners' feasts. Weddings were no longer held among landless young people, serving wenches and farm hands, but a 'wedding dance', where the guests were offered shots of spirits for a fee, and a fee was also charged for dancing with the bride (Vilkuna, K. 1950).

Among the landed classes, weddings became longer and longer; they may have lasted up to two weeks. The wedding started at the bride's home, and later the wedding party moved on to the groom's home, where the eating and dancing continued. Increasing numbers of hierarchy rites became a part of weddings, used to demonstrate the social status of each wedding guest. The guests were received in rank order, seating at the wedding table was in rank order, the speeches were made in rank order, the dance floor was entered in rank order. Wedding processions also observed the community hierarchy: at the head drove the parish vicar and other upper classes in their traps, then estate owners and other large land owners in their traps, then the farmers on their wagons, and finally the poorer folk on foot. It was no longer important which kinship group a person belonged to, but what kind of a house he came from and how much property he had. Social problems in Western Finland culminated in a revolt of rural proletariat and a civil war in the early 1900s.

Thai village wedding

New village feast. Village weddings have become customary in Northern Thailand only in the 1980s, in more remote villages the 1990s. The wedding formula follows that of Finnish and other European village weddings in

many respects. The wedding is held in the bride's home and the guests on the groom's side arrive there in public procession. The groom's representatives are received at the gate, and after the 'wedding ceremony' the young couple is publicly escorted to the wedding bed. Like village weddings, Thai weddings also end in a shared wedding meal, which is served under festive canopies in the compound.

When the favourable date determined by Azan Wat arrives, the wedding guests on the groom's side set off towards the bride's house, accompanied by drummers. On the way, village women position themselves at the head of the procession to dance; thus they lead the procession and bring luck to the new couple. A good while before the procession sets off, the drummers have performed drum pieces in the compound of the groom's parents' house, inviting the groom's kin and his friends to gather together. Everyone in the village knows that a wedding is about to start.

The procession includes the groom's parents and his female assistant, who might be his elder married sister or other female relative, as in Karelian kinship weddings. She carries a silver bowl containing the betrothal gifts promised by the groom and the bridal fee. A floral decoration, *baisri*, is also carried in the wedding procession; it belongs in all ceremonies marking the beginning of something new, looking to the future. Two banana seedlings may also be carried, they are intended for the new home.

The guests on the bride's side wait at the gate of the wedding house. A long silver belt is stretched across it, held by two female relatives of the bride; behind the belt the wedding guests on the bride's side mill around, smiling cheerfully. At the gate the groom must pay a silver belt fee. The cash is not the essence, as the groom only parts with a few coins, but that the wedding procession halts, there is a pause in the progress of events, and the two kinship groups are allowed time to meet each other. The wedding guests disperse in the bridal house compound to greet each other and to meet new relatives from other villages. In the compound of the wedding house, the groom's and bride's parents meet each other in a new status, and a *baisri* is given to the bride's father. The groom with his closest aides continues towards the stairs of the wedding house, where he must pay the gold belt fee. The gold belt is usually held by the bride's younger sisters or girls who are her close relations. Only then is the groom permitted to ascend to the house and meet his bride, although sometimes the bride is waiting at the foot of the stairs. While paying the silver and gold belt fees, the groom meets his wife's parents and younger sisters, as well as other women of the compound.

On entering the wedding chamber, the groom and bride first kneel in front of Buddha's altar and perform a ritual bow by touching the floor with their foreheads, and then kneel on the mat behind wedding cushions, the groom on the bride's right. To the left of the bride kneel the bridesmaids, of whom there may be two, and on the groom's right his assistant, the groomsman or best man. The ceremonies often start with the bride's parents blessing their daughter and son-in-law and the groom placing a necklace (engagement gift) around the bride's neck; then the groom's father or some older relative pays the groom fee (milk money). Then the joining of the young couple, 'wedding', begins. The village chief or some other revered person ties a white cord around the groom's and bride's heads and thus binds them together, followed by tying of the couple's hands together. First the groom's and bride's parents or the village chief ties a white cord around the groom's left hand and the bride's right, blesses them, and places cash in an offering bowl as wedding present. Now the wedding guests one after another kneel in front of the couple, tie their wrists together and give a cash gift. The bridesmaids hand out a gift to everyone in return, a parcel containing some small item, usually a handkerchief; the point is to give something back, as among Thai and Chinese people, nothing is accepted without giving something in return.

After the tying of the hands, the bridal couple is escorted to the 'scented chamber' or the wedding bed, which is decorated with scented flowers. The cord joining the couple's heads is removed, and the bride's mother or most commonly some older woman leads them from a white cord, their hands still tied together, into the chamber containing the wedding bed; the guests push around behind. The woman must have a 'lucky name', meaning a name that may be associated with good fortune, success or prosperity, and she herself must have had a long and happy marriage. In the scented chamber, the young couple lie down side by side on the wedding bed, and the cords tying their wrists are cut. The actual wedding ceremony ends here, but a common custom is throwing of a handful of coins on the wedding bed, to be collected in contest by the bride and groom; whichever succeeds in gathering more coins will dominate the family finances. The bride is usually more adept at picking up the coins.

During the afternoon the wedding feast begins, with alcoholic beverages served, and a local band with singer hired by many grooms today to entertain the guests. The fare is prepared by village women together, in the same way as at funerals. Buddhist monks are not invited to weddings, so the wedding meal does not have to be served during the morning like at funerals and housewarmings, but the celebration may begin in the afternoon and continue late into the night. In the early evening, the young couple does the rounds of the tables to chat to the guests and then disappear.

Hierarchy of Thai village weddings. In agrarian villages, the advent of private land ownership has brought about a real structural change, also evident in entering marriage. Private land ownership was made official in the villages of this paper only in the early 1970s, when an irrigation system was completed on the central plains, and the government was in general making an effort to promote commercial rice growing. Then legalization of land distribution became necessary; village rice fields were divided into private ownership of houses, and taxation of farmed land began. At the time of self-sufficiency families could farm much more freely, 'as much as each needed', and to this day there is no private land ownership in swidden cultivation villages in the mountains. Like in agrarian villages of Western Finland, agricultural land in plains villages of Thailand started to accumulate in the hands of farmers who were adapting to their commercial environment, and a social hierarchy based on land ownership evolved in the villages. Today, as Thailand has also become an education society, the most important criteria in selecting a spouse and in social relationships is the bride's and groom's occupation.

New manifestations have become elements of wedding celebrations. In village weddings, the social status of the young couple and their families is evident from how many villagers join the wedding procession, how many people gather in the wedding house, and how large the wedding feast is. Tying of the bridal couple's hands observes the internal hierarchy of the village; the ceremony is started by the village chief, if he is able to attend, and the tying of the hands follows an order based on age and prosperity. In the order of hand-tying, the wealthiest dignitaries in the village take precedence even over the bridal couple's relatives. On the other hand, a high status must also be earned in the eyes of the villagers, and the wealthy are expected to make larger gifts than the others to the young couple.

At the time of transition to paid employment and a cash economy, testing of the seriousness of grooms' intentions of marriage became common, by demanding an engagement gift and also a bridal fee (milk money) intended for the bride's mother as reimbursement for bringing up her daughter. According to established custom, the groom gives his bride a silver or gold necklace or chain (and bracelet), the value of which is expressed in 'coins', or to how many old silver or gold coins in weight the chain is equivalent. The bridegroom and his kin also had to pay all expenses of organizing the wedding. Getting married has become a great financial burden to young men and their families, talked about a great deal among both parents and young people themselves. As girls and boys go to school as equals and with each gaining professional qualifications, wedding procedures are evidently set to change again. As the young migrate to cities, a public wedding has often been an occasion where the daughter of the house was able to

introduce her future husband and his family to her own relatives and villagers. At the same time, the wedding marks the bride's separation, as she finally moves away from the village community and begins an independent life in some city, outside the local kinship group and its safety nets. The groom's occupation and the visible prosperity of his kin ensured that the daughter's marriage would be financially secure and happy.

3. Marriage and postlocal future

Multicultural individuality

Return to quiet weddings. During the great structural change of the 1960s and 1970s, wedding customs also became urbanized and privatized; culture was transferred to technosystems that produce wedding customs, wedding dresses, wedding meals and all other transnational wedding culture. In the euphoria of modernization, the international development elite looked down on traditions, often considering them as holding back development and preventing realization of individual freedom. According to leftist critique, old customs were a remnant of class society and not fit for the new democratic society. In the great structural change, the local human being became a commercial individual, whose function was to consume the new culture produced by technosystems. In reality, the life of an 'ordinary' human being no longer had any social significance, and in commercial society, families started to invest in their own economies and no longer in community culture, public ceremonies, wedding celebrations. Ideas of local communities on marriage, morality and family also lost their significance.

Prolonged education and gaining professional qualifications, increased social mobility – moving around after jobs – and new cultural revolutions, such as sexual liberation, changed young people's courtship and marriage customs. Young people had fewer established routes of seeking marriage partners, compared with rural communities; in-

creasing numbers meet on the Internet and marry people from other countries. As an alternative to marriage emerged the partnership, a long-term relationship entered into without formalities. After the local way of life disappeared, publicity is no longer needed. Marriages, as well as partnerships today, are registered and the rights of spouses and children are laid down by law in ever more detail. Reading of the banns in church also lost its actual meaning when the church lost its position as centre of society; engagements and weddings are now publicised by advertising in newspapers, the media. With the advent of postlocal mass culture, the wedding of an ordinary person became downright embarrassing; age group rites were kind of hidden and limited to the family circle. The marriage was made public in 'private', by celebrating at a restaurant with the closest relatives and friends, or if a wedding was held, it was shrouded in inconspicuity, held on the quiet.

In increasingly promiscuous Western society, marriage no longer regulates sexual life or having children, reproduction of society. As finalization progresses, marriage may disappear altogether and be replaced with relationships which the postlocal individual may produce for himself everywhere in his transnational life environment. Nor are families needed; fewer and fewer people even have the opportunity of committing to a long-term life project, such as one required by bringing up children. Modern development meritocracy has also removed parenthood, respect for parents, and the opportunities of parents to bring up their children into anything other than endless competition. As the importance of motherhood and fatherhood declines, all the institutions created around human reproduction and growth into a human being also vanish. According to genetic engineering, mankind can reproduce by artificial means; in perfect fertility institutions reproduction of perfect individuals is controlled and secured by scientific-technological means.

Wedding tradition of consciousness technicians. Virtual reality may replace the rites of passage of private individuals. Modern consciousness technicians can produce more and more sensational news on famous people's courtship affairs, marriages and divorces. Ordinary people can follow great people's rites of passage, weddings of princesses, film stars, mass idols; funerals of great men. Through them, the masses are made to believe that they are together taking part in a great global event, a world-level sociodrama. Romantic, beautiful, traditional wedding ceremonies are sold to people whose own lives do not cross the publicity threshold.

The consciousness industry produces ever more conflicting cultural experiences, serial marriage stories and divorce tales of global cultural heroes, multisexual, multilayered, multiethnic cultural experiences of cultural performers,

which are used to mystify individual freedom, individual rights, the hedonistic heroism of the new generation. Relationships, too, become structurally uniform virtual culture, produced all over the world's media to the same formulae.

The media increasingly emphasize divorces, family break-up and single parenthood. Single people, the sexually deviant and neo-families have become key targets of media culture; in reality, too, the divorced are the largest social group, the experiences and coping processes of which consciousness technicians – reporters, writers, pop music producers and researchers – endlessly chew over.

Age group rites have been traditions that have provided the means of managing the individual's adaptation to the life environment of his time; they have been controlled by power systems of each era. On transition from a kinship system to Christian agrarian society, the church took control of human life from birth to death; it has been displaced by scientific-technological development faith, with power that reaches even deeper. Development meritocracy has produced a collectively homogeneous human life. The fewer the public ceremonies associated with the individual's life stages, the less the community is interested in its members, and the lower the social significance of individuals in their own living environment. We do not know the status of rites of passage in the life of the 'new generation'. Perhaps in the end, as fossil fuels run out, the power of global economic growth will be broken and mankind will return to local economy. A permanent family and own community may again become 'new values', self-sufficiency and family regain their former status, bringing security to man's local future.

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