

PARALLEL-COUSIN (FBD) MARRIAGE, ISLAMIZATION, AND ARABIZATION

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Islamization, along with an area's inclusion in the eighth-century Arab-Islamic Khalifate (and its persistence within the Islamic world) is a strong and significant predictor of parallel-cousin (FBD) marriage. While there is a clear functional connection between Islam and FBD marriage, the prescription to marry a FBD does not appear to be sufficient to persuade people to actually marry thus, even if the marriage brings with it economic advantages. A systematic acceptance of parallel-cousin marriage took place when Islamization occurred together with Arabization. (Cross-cultural research, Middle East, marriage, Galton's problem)

Cousin marriages are widespread among the cultures of the world (Ember 1983:83; Pasternak, Ember, and Ember 1997:133). The vast majority of these are cross-cousin marriages; the other main type, parallel-cousin marriage, is much less common. Parallel-cousin marriage can be divided into two types; matrilineal (MSD) and patrilineal (FBD). The former is so rare that I am aware of only one ethnographic case; i.e., that of the Tuareg of the Sahara (Pershits 1998:543). The latter is much more common but still is restricted to a few dozen cultures, and the shape of its regional distribution is rather peculiar. The overwhelming majority of these cases appear among the Islamic cultures of North Africa, and those of west and central Asia. That this marriage arrangement is connected with Islam stems logically from this observation, and has been expressed by many students of Middle Eastern anthropology (e.g., Barth 1954; Murphy and Kasdan 1959; Bourdieu 1995:30-71; for an almost exhaustive list of corroborative publications in French and English see Rodionov 1999:266).¹

An initial attempt to test the hypothesis connecting Islam and FBD marriage by using the electronic version of the Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock et al. 1990) immediately resulted in a problem. Astonishingly, the first test showed no connection at all between Islamization and FBD marriage. The next step was to look at the individual cases. The results were even stranger. The sample comprising the societies with FBD marriage included Mbala, Nyasa, Cantonese, Rotinese, Banyun, Konkomba, Yurak, Mentawaians, Sivokakmeit, Goajiro, Songo, Afikpo, Toma, Coniagui, Riffians, Ossetians, Ainu, Yakut, Saramacca, Fon, Kanuri, Shantung, and Tibetans. Clearly there was something wrong here. The Ainu and Ossetians, for example, could never have practiced parallel-cousin marriage. On the other hand, some peoples definitely having FBD marriage turned out to be listed as having cross-cousin FSD marriage; e.g., Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians, and Iranians. The answer to this apparent puzzle is simple: the authors of the electronic version of the Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock et al. 1990) mixed up the codes. The codes for variable

24 turned out to be the ones for variable 23. Thus, the actual codes for variable 23 should be read as follows:

- 0 = Missing data
- 1 = All four cousins
- 2 = Three of four cousins
- 3 = Two of four cousins (e.g., paternal)
- 4 = One of four cousins (e.g., FBD)
- 5 = No first cousins
- 6 = First and some second cousins excluded
- 7 = No first, unknown for second
- 8 = No first or second cousins
- 9 = No preferential or prescriptive unions

However, a closer inspection of the electronic Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock et al. 1990) data showed that its authors had simply lost the information on parallel-cousin FBD marriage while recoding the original codes of Murdock (1967). The value of the 1967 Atlas variable 25 (Cousin Marriage) corresponding to the presence of parallel-cousin FBD marriage (Qa) appears not to have been reflected at all in the electronic version. Hence, there was no other choice but to use the printed version (Murdock 1967). (The most recent electronic version of the Atlas [Murdock et al. 1999-2000] has corrected this mistake.)

A straightforward cross-tabulation of the presence of parallel-cousin FBD marriage and Islamization (Tishkov [1998] is the basis for coding this variable) produced the following results:

Table 1: Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage/Islamization Cross-Tabulation

Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage	Islamization		Total
	0 (absent)	1 (present)	
0 (absent)	702 95.6%	32 4.4%	734 100.0%
1 (present)	4 16.7%	20 83.3%	24 100.0%
Total	706 93.1%	52 6.9%	758 100.0%

Note: Fisher's exact test (1-sided): $p < 0.0001$
Phi=0.55; Gamma=0.98, $p=0.000004$

The results looked immediately promising. The correlation turned out to be in the predicted direction and very strong.² A Gamma coefficient as high as 0.98 looked especially impressive. Of course, it was not difficult to interpret Phi and Gamma in

conjunction with the cross-tabulation: the absence of Islamization appears to be a very strong predictor of the absence of parallel-cousin marriage; i.e., if a given culture has nothing to do with Islam, it is almost certain that the preference for FBD marriage does not occur. But knowing that a given culture is Islamic is not a certain predictor of FBD marriage.

The next step was to change the units of comparison. Instead of treating individual cultures as such, Murdock's culture areas became the units of comparison. Murdock divided the world into six megaregions: (Sub-Saharan) Africa, Circum-mediterrania, East Asia, Insular Pacific, North America, and South America. He also subdivided each of the regions into ten ethnographic areas. For example, Insular Pacific was subdivided into the Philippines-Formosa, West Indonesia, East Indonesia, Australia, New Guinea, Micronesia, West Melanesia, East Melanesia, West Polynesia, and East Polynesia. These areas were chosen as units of comparison. The recoding for them was done along the following lines. The degree of an area's Islamization was coded as 0 (absent) if there were no Islamic cultures at all in the area. If less than 50 per cent of an area's cultures were Islamic, its Islamization degree was 1 (low Islamization). If most of an area's cultures were Islamic, its Islamization degree was 2 (high). The presence of FBD marriage in an area was coded in the following way. The areas where no cultures practiced preferential parallel-cousin marriage were coded as 0 (absent); the areas where less than 35 per cent of cultures practiced it were coded as 1 (rare), and the areas where more than 35 per cent of cultures practiced FBD marriage were coded as 2 (common). The relation between the two variables looked as follows:

Table 2:
Presence of Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage/Area's Islamization Cross-Tabulation

Presence of Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage	Area Islamization			Total
	0 (absent)	1 (low)	2 (high)	
0 (absent)	41	10		51
1 (rare)		3	2	5
2 (common)			4	4
Total	41	13	6	60

Note: Rho=0.71; p=0.0001
Gamma = 1.0; p=0.0002

The correlation here is strong even by the most exacting statistical standards. Mapping the areas where FBD marriage is common (North Africa, Sahara, Near and Middle East) immediately reveals that the resulting region does not look quite like

the Islamic world. Its shape much more closely resembles the territory of the eighth-century Islamic Khalifate. One evident exception is the Iberian Peninsula, which was mostly within this Khalifate but was reconquered by Christians. This immediately suggests that an area's inclusion into the Khalifate might be a better predictor of preferential FBD marriage than its Islamization. The results of the tests are as follows:

Table 3: Area Islamization/Parallel Cousin (FBD) Marriage

Area Islamization	Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage		Total
	0 (absent or rare)	1 (common)	
0 (absent)	41		41
1 (low)	13		13
2 (high)	2	4	6
Total	56	4	60

Note: $\text{Rho}=0.509$; $p=0.00003$

Table 4: Area Inclusion into the Eighth-Century Arab-Islamic Khalifate (with Remaining in Islamic World Afterwards)/Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage Cross-Tabulation

Area Inclusion	Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage		Total
	0 (absent or rare)	1 (common)	
0 (no inclusion)	54		54
1 (partial inclusion)	2	1	3
2 (full inclusion)		3	3
Total	56	4	60

Source: Bol'shakov 1989-2000.

Note: $\text{Rho}=0.823$; $p=0.0001$

Indeed, an area's inclusion in the Khalifate (and remaining in the Islamic world afterwards) turned out to be a much better predictor of common occurrence of preferential FBD marriage than an area's Islamization. Still, even with Spearman's Rho as high as 0.82, the results are not entirely satisfying. One expects an even stronger correlation. The next step was to study the individual cases more attentively (ethnographic areas in this instance). It did not take long to discover what brought the correlation strength to a level lower than expected. The problem was created by the areas which I coded as partially included in the Khalifate (i.e., Sahara, Turkey-

Caucasus, and Central Asia). First, to code Sahara as partly included was, of course, a bit of an overstatement. Only small parts of the northern Sahara came under the influence of the Khalifate. Vast areas of the southern Sahara were completely beyond any control of this polity. Hence, there was no choice but to split the Sahara into North Sahara and South Sahara. Only North Sahara was coded as partly included, whereas South Sahara was coded as not included. A similar problem appeared with Murdock’s Turkey-Caucasus. Only its southernmost part was conquered by the Arabs and successfully Islamized. This area was also split in two, approximately along the Khalifate borders of the eighth century. The northern part was coded as not included, the southern part was coded as fully included. Central Asia, however, created the most problems. A closer inspection of the printed version of the Ethnographic Atlas showed that it included just those central Asian cultures (Kazak, Monguor, Khalka, and Chahar) that occupied territories well outside the Khalifate borders. It did not include any cultures from the southeastern part of central Asia conquered by the Arabs in the seventh to eighth centuries. Thus, there was nothing to split. I had no choice but to code south-central Asia myself. The study of a sample of south-central Asian cultures produced the following results: out of eighteen south-central Asian cultures studied, twelve (>66 per cent) had preferred parallel-cousin (FBD) marriage.³ Thus, coding this area as “FBD marriage: common” produced the following cross-tabulation.

Table 5: Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage/Area Inclusion into the Eighth-Century Arab-Islamic Khalifate (with Remaining in Islamic World Afterwards)

Area Inclusion	Parallel-Cousin (FBD) Marriage	
	0 (absent or rare)	1 (common)
0 (no inclusion)	57*	0
1 (partial inclusion)	0	1**
2 (full inclusion)	0	5***

* African hunters, S. Afr. Bantu, C. Bantu, NE Bantu, Equatorial Bantu, Guinea Coast, W. Sudan, Nigerian Plateau, E. Sudan, Upper Nile, Ethiopia and the African Horn, Moslem Sudan, S. Sahara, South Europe, Overseas Europeans, NW Europe, E. Europe, Turkey-N. Caucasus, N. Central Asia, Arctic Asia, East Asia, Himalayas, N.-C. India, S. India, Indian Ocean, Assam-Burma, SE Asia, Philippines-Formosa, W. Indonesia, E. Indonesia, Australia, New Guinea, Micronesia, W. Melanesia, E. Melanesia, W. Polynesia, E. Polynesia, Arctic America, NW Coast, California, Great Basin-Plains, Plains, Prairie, E. Woodlands, Southwest, NW Mexico, C. Mexico, C. America, Caribbean, Guiana, Lower Amazonia, Inner Amazonia, Andes, Chile-Patagonia, Gran Chago, Mato Grosso, E. Brazil

** North Sahara

*** N. Africa, S. Caucasus, Semitic Near East, Middle East, S. Central Asia

Note: Rho=0.999; p=0.0001

So, finally, there was no doubt that an area's inclusion in the eighth-century Arab Khalifate (and remaining in the Islamic world afterwards) is one of the strongest possible predictors of FBD marriage. But why?

DISCUSSION

On the one hand, there seems to be no serious doubt that there is some functional connection between Islam and FBD marriage. Indeed, this marriage type appears to be highly adaptive within an Islamic context. As is well known, an important feature of Islamic law (*al-Shari:‘ah*) is that it insists that a daughter have her share of inheritance, although half the size of a son's. What is more, she must have her firm share of inheritance in all types of property left by her father. "The Quranic verses of inheritance (4:7, 11-12, 176) . . . granted inheritance rights to . . . daughters . . . of the deceased in a patriarchal society where all rights were traditionally vested solely in male heirs. Similar legal rights would not occur in the West until the nineteenth century" (Esposito 1998:95; see also Schacht 1964; Esposito 1982). Islamic religious authorities often paid great attention to the observance of this rule, interpreting any attempts to deprive a daughter of her share in any type of property as a clear manifestation of *Ta:ghu:t* (Satanic law) (Dresch 1989).

This norm does not appear to have created any serious problems in nonagricultural mercantile Mecca. However, it often created serious problems in an intensive agriculturalist, patrilineal, exogamous, patrilocal context. Imagine, within such a context, an extended family of plow agriculturalists living in a monoclan village and possessing a large, consolidated, easily exploitable plot of land. For this family to observe the above-mentioned Islamic norm without changing its marriage patterns would mean that in every generation a significant proportion of the land would be inherited by daughters. With exogamous patrilocal marriage, the daughters would have to be married to men of other villages. However, the people are plow agriculturalists who are also Muslims observing (to at least some extent) Islamic seclusion of women. The daughter would be highly unlikely to till the land; her husband would actually plow and control it. Hence, the land would actually fall under the control of a daughter's husband's household. As a result, within a span of just a few generations what had been a consolidated tract of land would be turned into a patchwork of small plots belonging to different households. The male members of the extended family would also, of course, get control over various small pieces of land through their wives. But a mosaic of small land pieces scattered about the vicinity would be small compensation for the loss of the large, viable mass of land that the family had controlled.

Within such a context parallel-cousin (FBD) marriage would solve the problem. If a man's daughter marries his brother's son, the land that she would inherit remains under the control of her father's family and he does not have the problems described above (Rosenfeld 1957). Hence, the association of parallel-cousin (FBD) marriage and Islam is not at all surprising.

Islamic law does not prohibit FBD marriage, nor does it impose (or even recommend) it (Schacht 1964; al-Jazi:ri: 1990:60-61). But most traditional cultures have a clear perception that marriage between a man and his FBD is incestuous. This is evident in the fact that in most languages a kinship term for FBD (or MSD) would be identical with a kinship term for one's sister. This normally implies that marriage with a FBD (or MSD) would be perceived as equivalent to marriage with a sister (Korotayev 1999). There appears to be something here that Kronenfeld (pers. comm.) called a "cognitive problem." Within such a context the mere permission to marry a FBD is insufficient to overcome the above-mentioned cognitive problem, even if such a marriage brought some clear economic advantages for a groom and his family (as actually occurs, for example, within most Muslim societies of sub-Saharan Africa). Evidently, there should be something else in addition to Islamization to persuade someone to do this. That "something else" was present in the Arab-Islamic Khalifate of the seventh and eighth centuries (at least up to AD 751). What was it? Russian Islamic studies traditionally designated Islamic civilization as Arab-Muslim (which often met with strong objections from Muslim colleagues from former Soviet central Asia [e.g., Ahmadjonzoda 1988]). However, this designation is helpful in some respects. The fact is that this civilization (especially within the territory of the first Islamic Empire) seems to contain important Arab non-Islamic elements and cannot be understood without taking them into account.

It is important to mention that Arabs were the dominant ethnic group within the Islamic Empire at least until the Abbasid revolution in the middle of the eighth century AD, and Arab culture as a whole (including its non-Islamic components, like preferential parallel-cousin [FBD] marriage) acquired high prestige and proliferated within the borders of the Empire.

With the conquests, the Arabs found themselves in charge of a huge non-Arab population. Given that it was non-Muslim, this population could be awarded a status similar to that of clients in Arabia, retaining its own organization under Arab control in return for the payment of taxes. . . . But converts posed a novel problem in that, on the one hand they had to be incorporated, not merely accommodated, within Arab society; and on the other hand, they had forgotten their genealogies, suffered defeat and frequently also enslavement, so that they did not make acceptable *hali:fs*; the only non-Arabs to be affiliated as such were the Hamra' and Asa:wira, Persian soldiers who deserted to the Arabs during the wars of conquest in return for privileged status. . . . It was in response to this novel problem that Islamic *wala:'* [the system of integration of non-Arab Muslims into Islamic society as dependent *mawa:li:*] was evolved. (Crone 1991:875)

It is amazing that such a highly qualified specialist in early Islamic history as Crone managed to overlook another (and much more important) exception: the Yemenis (most of whom do not seem to have belonged to the Arab proto-ethnos by the beginning of the seventh century AD). The possible explanation here might be that Yemeni efforts aimed at persuading the Arabs that southern Arabians had always been Arabs—that is, that they were as Arab as the Arabs themselves, or even more Arab than the Arabs (*al-'arab al-'a:ribah*, as distinct from *al-'arab al-musta'ribah* [Piotrovskij 1985:67; Shahid 1989:340-41; Robin 1991:64])—turned out to be so

successful that they managed to persuade not only themselves and the Arabs, but the Arabists as well.

However, in order to be recognized as Arabs, and thus as competent members of early Islamic society, the Yemenis had to adopt many Arab practices, even those that had no direct connection to Islam. An example of this is the Yemeni borrowing of Arab genealogical tradition. The pre-Islamic south Arabian communities were *sha'bs*, emphatically territorial entities.

In strong contrast to the north Arabian practice of recording long lists of ancestors (attested also for the pre-Islamic period in the Safaitic inscriptions), epigraphic south Arabian nomenclature consisted simply of given name plus the name of the social grouping (usually the *bayt*), with optional insertion of the father's given name, but never any mention of an ancestor in any higher degree. One is irresistibly reminded of the remark attributed to the caliph 'Umar: "Learn your genealogies, and be not like the Nabataeans of Mesopotamia who, when asked who they are, say 'I am from such-and-such a village,'" which Ibn Khaldun quotes with the very significant comment that it is true also of the populations of the fertile tracts of Arabia. [The] *qabi:la* . . . [is] fundamentally kinship-based and totally different in nature from the *sha'b*. . . . The Qur'anic verse (49:13) "*ja'alna:-kum shu'u:b^m wa-qaba:'il^a*" clearly refers to two different types of social organization, and when speaking of the settled populations of Arabia, Ibn Khaldun is careful to use the word *shu'u:b* and not *qaba:'il*, reserving the latter for the nomads. (Beeston 1972a:257-58; see also Beeston 1972b:543; Ryckmans 1974:500; Robin 1982a, 1982b; Piotrovskij 1985:53, 69; Korotayev 1998)

In early Islamic times, under the influence of northern Arabian tribal culture which acquired the highest prestige in the Muslim world, many southern Arabian *sha'bs*, while remaining essentially territorial (Dresch 1989; Serjeant 1989:xi), were transformed into *qaba:'il*, tribes structured formally according to genealogical principles. This transformation was also the result of the southern Arabians' intense effort at developing their own genealogies, as well as their passionate (and successful) struggle for the recognition of their genealogies by the Arab elite. In this way they were able to attain high positions in the dominant Arab ethnos within the early Islamic state in the seventh to the middle of the eighth centuries (Piotrovskij 1977, 1985; al-Mad'aj 1988; Smith 1990).

All this suggests that within the Omayyid Khalifate there was strong informal pressure on the Islamized non-Arab groups to adopt Arab norms and practices, even if they had no direct connection with Islam (e.g., genealogies and preferential parallel-cousin marriage). On the other hand, after these cultural traits were adopted, particularly FBD marriage, their high functional value in the Islamic context would help to reproduce Arab cultural patterns for generations. In that historical context, when the Arabs were the dominant ethnic group, their norms and practices were borrowed by Islamized non-Arab groups striving to achieve full social status. Thus a systematic transition to FBD marriage took place when Islamization occurred together with Arabization. This was precisely the situation within the Arab Islamic Khalifate in the seventh and eighth centuries. And this might be the principal explanation for such a strong correlation between parallel-cousin FBD marriage and the area included in the Omayyid Khalifate.

Of course, the strong association between FBD marriage and Islam confronts what is traditionally called Galton's problem (Naroll 1961, 1970; Naroll and D'Andrade 1963; Driver and Chaney 1970; Ember 1971; Strauss and Orans 1975; Ember and Ember 1998:677-78). There is little doubt that almost all the known cases of preferential FBD marriage are the result of diffusion from what appears to be a single source. There is some likelihood that the cognitive problem specified above was solved just once, or that just a single solution produced dozens of cultures having FBD marriage that spread in a large but circumscribed area of the Old World.

At the time of its origin, FBD marriage had nothing to do with Islam. The cognitive problem solution seems to have occurred somewhere in the Syro-Palestine region well before the birth of Christ. Rodionov (1999) has recently drawn attention to the fact that this marriage pattern is widespread in the non-Islamic cultures of this area (e.g., Maronites or Druze) and that it has considerable functional value in this non-Islamic context in facilitating the division of property among brothers after their father's death (Rodionov 1999). Like Rodionov (1999), I believe that this marriage pattern could hardly be attributed to Islamic or Arab influence here. It seems, rather, that this marriage pattern in the Islamic world and the non-Islamic Syro-Palestinian cultures stems from the same source.

But prior to the time of Islam, the diffusion of the FBD marriage pattern was rather limited. The only adjacent area where it diffused widely was the Arabian Peninsula (Negrja 1981; Kudelin 1994), where its diffusion can be linked with a considerable Jewish influence in the area well before Islam (Crone 1987; Korotayev 1996; Korotayev, Klimenko, and Proussakov 1999). In any case, by the seventh century, preferential parallel-cousin marriage became quite common among several important Arab tribes (Negrja 1981; Kudelin 1994). In the seventh and eighth centuries, an explosive diffusion of this pattern took place when Arab tribes, backed by Islam, spread throughout the whole of the Omayyid Khalifate. Although preferential parallel-cousin marriage diffused (together with Islam and Arabs) later beyond the borders of the Omayyid Khalifate, the extent of this diffusion was very limited. Hence, the present distribution of FBD marriage was essentially created by the Muslim Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries. The strong correlation between the degree of the Islamization and the presence of FBD marriages is to a considerable extent a product of network autocorrelation produced by the Arab-Islamic historical context.

METHODOLOGICAL CONCLUSION

This research shows once again that both extreme positions regarding Galton's problem—that this problem invalidates all quantitative worldwide cross-cultural research (e.g., Chlenov 1988:197), or that this problem should not be taken seriously (e.g., Ember 1971; Ember and Ember 1998:678)—are not reasonable. Galton's problem must be taken seriously. Yet it is not a problem, but rather an asset of cross-cultural research. That is, any strong and significant correlation should be taken

seriously irrespective of whether or not it is a result of Galton's problem (i.e., network autocorrelation [see e.g., White, Burton, and Dow 1981; Dow, Burton, White, and Reitz 1984; Dow, Burton, and White 1982; Dow, White, and Burton 1983; Burton and White 1987:147, 1991]). If it is not, then it shows a worldwide cross-cultural regularity, but if it is, it then deals with a result of the functioning of a certain historical communicative network and its influence on the course of human history. And this is not less interesting. This also shows that attempts to restrict cross-cultural research entirely to the study of small random samples are counterproductive. Yes, their use tends to minimize Galton's problem, but this only makes sense if it is considered a problem, and not an asset. Of course, analysis of such samples could help find some worldwide cross-cultural regularities, but it can never assist with studying historical communicative networks and their influence on human cultural development.

NOTES

1. Russian (or rather, Soviet) anthropologists tended to explain it very differently, and within a unilinear evolutionary framework, suggesting that the development of parallel-cousin marriage must have been correlated with the development of social stratification and political centralization (e.g., Pershits 1955:55; Davydov 1979:123; Negrja 1981:82; Kudelin 1994:181). This theory is the least plausible. It does not survive even a preliminary verification/falsification test and does not explain why so many cultures that achieved a fairly similar level of stratification and political centralization (in Europe, south, southeast, and east Asia, etc.) failed to develop a similar kind of marriage.
2. All quantitative cross-cultural researchers know that it is quite unusual to get a correlation coefficient higher than 0.5 for a first cross-tabulation of two variables for an Ethnographic Atlas-sized sample. Of course, statistics textbooks teach us that only a correlation of > 0.7 can be regarded as strong, whereas if it is between 0.5 and 0.7 it should only be regarded as of medium strength. However, experience with cross-cultural statistical analysis has led us to the point where we now teach our students that a correlation coefficient of 0.5 while testing two Ethnographic Atlas variables should be regarded as strong, whereas even 0.4 should not be regarded as a weak correlation, but rather as of medium strength.
3. I thank Vladimir Yurlov for his assistance with collecting the data on Central Asia. The sources used are as follows: Andreev 1949, 1953; Kisljakov 1969; Monogarova 1949, 1972; Shanijazov 1964; Tolstov et al. 1963.

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