

## FOUR



### HUSBANDS AND WIVES<sup>1</sup>

[41–50; 62–71; 161–168; 82–86]

AS INDICATED BEFORE, a Gilyak is permitted, at least presently, to have sexual intercourse or to marry a woman of his tribe who is not related to him in any way. In regard to such unrelated women, however, he has no rights whatever. Sexual intercourse occurs at the risk of bloody retaliation on the part of certain groups of men while individual marriage becomes merely a civil pact accompanied by payment of considerable purchase monies [82].

Quite different is the position of a man towards all those women who stand to him in the relation of *ang'rei* ("wife"). As we have seen, this category contains (1) all mother's brothers' daughters; (2) all his wife's "sisters"; (3) the "sisters" of his "brothers'" wives; (4) the individual wives of all *aki*, that is, wives of senior "brother" among the Gilyak of the Eastern dialect; (5) wives of all "brothers" without distinction of age among the Gilyak of the Western dialect; (6) every woman of his own generation belonging to his *akhmalk* clan. Every woman in her turn applies the term *pu* ("husband") to (1) all her father's sisters' sons; (2) all actual husbands of her "sisters," and the "brothers" of those husbands; and (3) all actual husband's junior "brothers," or in some localities, all her husband's "brothers." All these categories of "wives" and "husbands" are by no means nominal; they stand for two important and real rights: the right to sexual intercourse and the right to individual marriage.

As a rule the rights of a *pu* or an *ang'rei* belong to the individual from birth, but they may also be acquired through one's own or a clansman's marriage with a strange woman, that is, one completely unrelated to them. Thus a man may acquire a new *ang'rei* in the "sisters" of his own wife or his "brother's" wife and their sisters, who may have been until then complete strangers to him.

**THE RIGHT TO INDIVIDUAL MARRIAGE.** In the first place, the classes *pu* and *ang'rei* are united by their mutual and exclusive right to marriage. In other words, out of the entire

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<sup>1</sup> [Editor's note: The title for this chapter in the English and Russian AMNH and 1933 Soviet versions is "The Pu and Ang'rei Classes." The AMNH Russian typescript organizes this as two separate chapters, the second being "The Right to Individual Marriage"—here a subheading, as in Shternberg, *Giliaki*, and Shternberg, *Sem'ia*. The two Soviet 1933 publications run this material as a subsection of the longer previous chapter, "The Classificatory Kinship System and Norms of Sexual Relations and Marriage."]

number of individuals covered by the kin terms, only members of these two groups have the right to individual marriage. All other classes are strictly forbidden to marry one another. Here the mnemonic-adjudicating significance [*mnemonisticheskii-razreshitel'noe znachenie*] plays a key role, for when the proper kin relations can become confused, a firm knowledge of the marrying classes serves as the only guarantee against transgression. Such mnemonic significance exerts more than a legal influence.<sup>2</sup> Marriage prohibitions, as we have seen, are also absent among individuals who are complete strangers to each other in the sense of formal kinship; yet to consider such people *pu* or *ang'rei* prior to their marriage is impossible. Indeed, the right to individual marriage between persons of the *pu* and *ang'rei* categories is not a simple *nudum jus*. It is a right, as well as an obligation and a debt, for both interested parties. This sense of obligation is seen most vividly between brothers and each other's wives, who stand in relation to each other as *pu* and *ang'rei*. As a rule, widows of "brothers," one's own and collateral, cannot leave the clan but become the wives of their husband's surviving brothers, sometimes even notwithstanding the surviving brothers' wishes. None of them can refuse the widow presented to them.<sup>3</sup> It is not, however, in levirate that we find the most typical trait of the juridico-matrimonial relations of the *pu* and *ang'rei*. Levirate marriage is a more or less exceptional phenomenon and comprises only one small category of the entire marriage class. The most characteristic functioning of the matrimonial rights and obligations of the *pu* and *ang'rei* must be looked for in the conditions of normal marriage [83].

The obligatory character of the bonds between the *pu* and *ang'rei* have been shaken in recent times by many causes of which we shall speak later. Although the modern Gilyak may marry a strange woman from a clan not related to him, it is not the orthodox form of marriage but instead is a mere purchase, for such a woman must be paid for. Modern custom and ancient lore bear witness that marriage between the classes *pu* and *ang'rei* was obligatory and acknowledged it to be the only form of orthodox marriage. To quote a characteristic Gilyak expression, only such marriage is *sik urlaf urlaf parkin* (pure, holy), truly in conformity with the dictates of their religion. If a man hesitates to give his daughter to a *pu* who is wooing her, the father of the young man rebukes him, saying,

<sup>2</sup> [Editor's note: The two preceding sentences abridge the original Russian language from the AMNH Russian typescript and the 1933 Soviet editions, which used double negatives to express the same ideas.]

<sup>3</sup> [Editor's note: In place of the above paragraph, restored from the AMNH Russian typescript, 43, the AMNH English typescript excluded the interesting discussion of the mnemonic-adjudicating function of kin terms by presenting the more curt:

Towards all the individuals of these sanctioned groups one has obligations as well as rights. The mutual obligations of these classes stand out most clearly among "brothers" and their individual wives. At the death of a "brother," the widow is by a general rule prevented from marrying outside of the clan. She is allotted, by a decision of the clan, to one of the surviving "brothers" as an individual wife quite independently of her own sentiments in the matter, and no man belonging to the category of the widow's *pu* has the right to refuse her.

By contrast, however, the AMNH English typescript is the only edition to include the Gilyak-language imprecations in the next paragraph, which may have been added by Shternberg or Kreinovich.]

*Ti pekhlān nekhian kim khavrkhai brolv tor sik pikizndra'! Sik urlaf urlaf parkin khunivmugnate! Nekhlankunu petslanzunu vara vara, akhmalk-mugnate!*

("If you refuse to give your child to my child the old law will be wholly lost! We must all stay pure! Your children and my children are alike our common children, our common blood. Let us preserve the clan of our fathers-in-law!")

To illustrate how imperative this type of marriage seems to the Gilyak I shall cite an instance from one of their traditions. In this story a fight takes place between a young Gilyak and a mysterious transformed shaman.<sup>4</sup> The fight ends by the shaman being mortally wounded and retiring to his hut. On his deathbed the shaman learns that he is a remote *akhmalk* ("wife's father") of the murderer, hence, the clan of the shaman is obliged to give wives to the clan of his murderer. The shaman immediately sends for the young man, against whom blood-vengeance is imperative even if the murder were unpremeditated, and whom to admit into one's house would be the gravest offense. In the presence of members of his clan he solemnly declares, "Although this man has killed me, give him my daughter! Be sure not to forget my word!" Such is the power of the ancient law of marriage between the *pu* and the *ang'rei*. It still retains its vitality.

The true extent of this institution of obligatory marriage is fully reflected in the terminology of relationship. Let us review some of the key facts: (1) The wives of clansmen call each other, according to their generation, either younger and elder "sisters," "aunts," "great-aunts," and "nieces"; (2) all clansmen of an individual's wife are "wife's fathers" (*akhmalk*) to all clansmen of that individual; (3) a sister of a man's wife's father [when a man is speaking] is called "mother"; and (4) a daughter of a man's mother's brother is called "wife" (*ang'rei*). Such terminology could obviously only be formed under the following conditions: The wives of all the members of a clan must be taken from one and the same clan, and hence these women are in every generation agnatic sisters. This clan is for each man his mother's clan; his wife is his mother's brother's daughter. These principles notwithstanding, the destructive tendencies of later times are still all-pervading in the psychology of the Gilyak. The ideal is for all clansmen to take wives from one and the same clan, that is, the clan from which their fathers and forefathers used to take wives; while for each individ-

<sup>4</sup> The shaman had the power to change his human form into that of an animal or some other form. [Editor's note: Shternberg's 1904 monograph, "Giliaki," *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* 28, no. 2, 19–55, and Shternberg, *Giliaki*, 49–81, contain his cardinal essay "Religiia giliakov," discussing Gilyak shamanism. A recent, excellent book exploring shamanism among neighboring peoples of the Amur region is Anna Vasil'evna Smoliak, *Shaman: Lichnost' i funktsii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991). For broader perspectives on shamanism in the former Soviet Union, see Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, ed., *Shamanism: Soviet Studies of Traditional Religion in Siberia and Central Asia* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990); Roberte Hamayon, *La Chasse à l'Âme: Esquisse d'une Théorie du Chamanisme Siberien* (Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie, 1990); Michael Henry, ed., *Studies in Siberian Shamanism* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1963); and Anna-Leena Siikala and Mihály Hoppál, *Studies on Shamanism* (Helsinki: Finnish Anthropological Society, 1992).]

ual the most appropriate marriage is one with his mother's brother's daughter. If for some individual that should prove impossible, preference is always given to a clan from which some one of his own clansmen have occasionally taken wives. *Pfandukh ang'rei den urdra*, "From the clan of one's birth must a man take his wife." Thus runs the maxim of the Sakhalin Gilyak. "*Pil pand os apakukh ni umgu genei furara*" (From the father-in-law of one's own birth a wife should be taken), say the Gilyak of the Amur. "*Erur taf khoro*" ("I am sick for the home of my mother's brother"), is the theme of the modern Gilyak song. The extent to which these principles are operative was demonstrated from the very beginning of my statistical investigations. Even before I had fully grasped the details of the kinship nomenclature, I was struck by the frequent occurrence in each clan of wives who had been taken from one and the same clan, calling each other, according to their husband's generation, "sisters" and "aunts" (and who really proved to be such). A great number of Gilyak men who had been married several times had wives who frequently belonged to one and the same clan, namely, to their mother's clan. One of my traveling companions, Issaika, was married three times and all his wives had come from the same clan. In a great many cases the husbands and wives were children of real sisters and brothers, or at least children of cross-cousins.

As we have seen, such marriages are the only ones reputed to be orthodox or "pure." Such a marriage echoes what Fison and Howitt have described of the Gond and Bygar tribes of Sathpuras, central India, where, "marriage between cousins is almost compulsory when the brother's child is a daughter, and the sister's child a son."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the tendency towards marriage between children of "brothers" and "sisters" is so strong that the union is often agreed upon soon after the birth of the children in order to avoid accidents. Soon after the birth of a son, the mother's first concern is to do everything in her power to bring about his betrothal to the daughter of one of her brothers. The following ritual is performed: The baby bridegroom or his father ties around the bride's wrist a thread made of dog's fur and nettle, magical symbols for a household organized around fishing and dog breeding. From that moment the marriage is concluded. When the bride reaches the age of 4 or 5, she generally goes to the house of her bridegroom, and henceforth becomes his companion. The children call each other "my wife" or "my husband" (*nfu, nang'rei*) until sexual maturity is reached. Then without further ritual they become husband and wife *de facto*, dispensing with all the formalities that are generally required at marriages between strangers. This custom may account for the fact that the adult husband and wife generally call each other "old man" (*its'kh*) and "old woman" (*mam*). For at the age when most of us are about to be married, a young Gilyak couple can have been married long enough to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary. This custom is at

<sup>5</sup> Fison and Howitt, *Kamilaroi i Kurnai*, 154. [**Editor's note:** This quotation is not found in the AMNH English typescript and has been restored from the Russian versions. As an example of the terminological confusion that plagues all editions, it might be noted that Shternberg's handwritten insert to the AMNH Russian typescript lists the groups as the Sands and Bygars; Shternberg, *Giliaki*, speaks of the Song and Bygar; and Shternberg, *Sem'ia*, lists the Gond and Bygor. The Fison and Howitt reference is to Gonds and Bygars, known as the Gond (Muria) and Byga (Baiga) in Library of Congress listings.]

times responsible for abnormal unions where the boy is 16 years of age and the girl 4 or 5. Not infrequently one finds such couples living in one yurta and calling each other "husband" and "wife." The explanation for such a union would be that either the wife's elder sister was dead or that the wife's mother was much younger than her brother. However that may be, such cases only tend to emphasize the binding character of marriages of this type. It is characteristic that these customs are practiced with special zeal by well-to-do families, who are generally noted for their strict adherence to all ancient customs and rituals [84].

The most important aspect of this primal form of marriage between the *pu* and *ang'rei* is the absence of payment for the bride, the so-called bride-price [*kalym*]. In marriage with unrelated women, which is becoming more and more widespread, the payment of the bride-price plays an all important role, being an important economic factor in the life of the Gilyak. Among the *pu* and *ang'rei*, especially when the parties are first-cousins, not only is no payment necessary, but it is strictly forbidden to mention the subject during the procedure of courting the bride. If the *pu* and *ang'rei* are distant cousins, sometimes an insignificant payment is made, but this is not the general rule. That in former times payment for a bride was wholly unknown can be clearly seen from the traditional epic poetry of the Gilyak, the *nastund*. There, while courting rituals are so often and so minutely described, there is no mention at all of payments for the bride. On the other hand, usually before sending the bride away, her "fathers" [*testi*] fill the canoe or sledge of the bridegroom with every kind of treasure.

Considering the great importance of bride-price in the economic life of the Gilyak—it sometimes being the only means of saving from ruin the household of a poor man—the complete absence of it in former times is the best demonstration of the obligatory character of marriage between these classes.

Owing to this obligatory character, undoubtedly brought about by religious motives, remarkable relations arose between individuals of the "wife's fathers" class and their "daughters' husbands." A "son-in-law" (*imgi*), even if he be only a potential one, receives at times better treatment at the hands of his "fathers-in-law" than is accorded to their own children. In some dialects the term for "father-in-law" is *arir*, which means "feeder," a term used by the Yukaghir for a man's own father. The code goes, "The son-in-law must be fed by the father-in-law." This dry formula is rich in meaning; in time of need the son-in-law, perhaps accompanied by his large family, goes to live with his "father-in-law," and without offering remuneration, stays with him for months or even years. At all times the son-in-law, even if only by name, is a favorite guest in his father-in-law's house. The young Gilyak spend entire months in boisterous recreation in the villages of their "fathers-in-law," finding in each yurta hearty welcome and the choicest food. The potential son-in-law is a constant participant in his "father-in-law's" fishing and hunting excursions and when the time of parting arrives, he carries home his share of the booty in addition to the customary presents. On important occasions such as the bear festival, the sons-in-law are the first to be invited, and upon them falls the honor of killing the animal. In time of war "sons-in-law" and "fathers-in-law" are expected to assist each other. In order to fully grasp the religious character of the strange relationship between "sons-in-law" and "fathers-



FIG. 11. The open front of a Gilyak summer house along the Tym' River in Arkovo, 1926. Rurnet, at left, and Zagan, at right, were the parents of Aleksei Churka (Zagan), the first Gilyak student to study in Leningrad. Photo by Shternberg student Erukhim A. (Iurii) Kreinovich. Source: AAN f. 282, o. 2, d. 313, l. 3.

in-law," we must note the wide application which the Gilyak, with a truly primitive passion for extending original taboos, give to the term "father-in-law."

We know from the kinship terminology that the clan of "fathers-in-law" is not only the clan from which an individual's clansmen usually take their wives, but also any clan from which any one clansman may take a wife. Thus every individual may have several clans of "fathers-in-law," and in every one of these clans a man finds the same privileged treatment and rights as with his real fathers-in-law.

The manner in which this complex system developed will be discussed in detail below. In the meantime, I believe, we have said enough to show that in the sphere of individual marriage the class names *pu* and *ang'rei* played and continue to play an all important role, symbolizing as they do the right to marriage—one of the many benefits conferred by the clan organization on its members [85].

We shall now indicate the practical bearing this institutionalized right to marriage has on the life of the Gilyak today. For the modern Gilyak, marriage is one of life's hardest ventures. Not merely in tales, but in real life, the task of finding a wife is one of uncommon difficulty due to the great paucity of women. From computations based on my census, it appears that for every 1000 Gilyak men on Sakhalin there are only 785 women, and a considerable percentage of well-to-do Gilyak keep from two to four wives. Thus, according to my census of the west coast of Sakhalin, north

of the village Arkovo, there was one polygamist to every nine monogamists, and one old bachelor to every 11 married men, the total proportion of men to women being 1000 to 694. If in addition one considers the numerous marriage prohibitions, it becomes clear how limited the choice of women must be. In view of so restricted a choice, the purchase money (bride-price) paid in valuables or services extending over many years naturally reaches very high figures. Under such conditions a great many of the poorer men would have no chance to get an individual wife were it not for the right to marry, under privileged conditions, persons of the *ang'rei* class. First among these, of course, are a man's mother's brothers' daughters, followed by their collateral sisters, and, finally, daughters of the large class of men known to him as his "wife's fathers" (*akhmalk*). As a necessary resort, there is always a likely chance of marrying a brother's widow. However, given the scarcity of women, the intense rivalry within each *pu* class for their *ang'rei*, the greed for bride-price spurred by a heightened trading economy, and hence the weakening of pure matrimonial traditions, even this privilege to individual marriage often remains a *nudum jus*. This is where the other important factor of Gilyak life which supplements individual marriage steps onto the scene, group marriage. To that we now turn.