

An informal supportive network. Quasi-kin groups, religion, and social order among Surinam Creoles in the Netherlands

by W. van Wetering

In the large blocks of apartment buildings in the Bijlmermeer, one of Amsterdam's new suburbs, high density levels of a Creole Surinamese population of migrants have created conditions favourable to the preservation of subcultural life styles. Apart from the many well-documented characteristics of lower-class culture the new residents show a marked attachment to an array of traditional institutions: kinship and both orthodox and popular religious allegiances. Apparently, this strongly contrasts with a no less eager pursuit of all amenities of modern life.

The rationale for this retreat in traditional and quasi-traditional cultural forms is to be found in the threat to group life posed by an involvement in lucrative but extra-legal activities. Unable to realize hopes of upwards mobility and economic betterment in accepted ways, many of the chronically unemployed turned to the opportunities opened up by, for example, the rapidly expanding traffic in drugs. Ethnic solidarity requires the in-group to put up stoically with a rise in the level of violence and a concomitant weakening of norms that used to regulate group life in the home country. To cope with these threats all conventional forces – kinship and religion in its full variety – are mustered to bolster the minimum requirements of social order.

'We only shared the bed and with reluctance'. Recent changes in Andalusian marriage by Rieke Leenders

The thesis that male-female relations in Andalusia are characterised by notions of honour and shame, put forward by Pitt-Rivers and many of his successors, is here confronted with recent ethnographic data from Peralto, an Andalusian agro-town. Notions of honour and shame are still at a premium and express themselves especially in a rather extreme form of emotional distance between the sexes. Above all the old elite and most of the men appear to have an interest in preserving this form of male-female relations. But one can distinguish at least three categories of people who are more and more opposed to the traditional forms: the middle-class, youth and most women. This gradual 'modernization' of male-female relations is explained by changes in the relations of power, both between classes and between the sexes.

Bundling. Sexual ethics and power relations in Austria

by Heidi Dahles

Bundling, a form of courting involving premarital sex, was practiced in many rural societies of Europe. It has been interpreted in terms of sexual freedom characterizing societies where women derive power from contributing essentially to the household production.

In the Austrian peasant society under study, which was characterized by social differences between landowners and landless labourers, bundling was a strategy to find a suitable partner. Being confined to the village youth and being strictly regulated along class lines, bundling assured a high degree of village and class endogamy. For landowning peasants, practicing impartible inheritance and being primarily concerned about their property, it was of crucial importance that the heir contracted a fertile marriage with a partner of equal social standing. Women were made subservient to this central interest. As the church objected to the consolidation of patrimonia and the premarital proof of fertility, bundling was a means of evading the clerical prohibitions.

Anomalous marriages: family, power and manipulation in Andalusia, 1871-1975

by Henk Driessen

The obscurity of cousin marriage in the ethnography of southern Europe contrasts sharply with the prominence of close marriage in the anthropological record of 'kin-ordered' societies. In the former case it is tacitly assumed that cousin marriage is insignificant because of the ban on consanguinity in marriage, while in the latter case a congruence between preferential marriage rules and actual behavior has often been taken for granted. Combining a focus on marriage behavior with an analysis of kinship ideology, this paper demonstrates the social significance of cousin marriage in an Andalusian township where it is the most striking instance of manipulation of kinship obligations through marriage. There is a clustering of cousin marriages in two powerful families who until recently dominated town life. An ingenious combination of endogamous and exogamous marriages operated to keep wealth and power, honour and reputation within family ranks. The manipulation of kinship ideology in cousin marriage is facilitated by the ambiguous nature of the cousin category in a bilateral descent system.