MARRIAGE AND THE ELEMENTARY FAMILY AMONG THE SCOTTISH TINKERS

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In the first part of this paper I shall discuss the institution of Tinker marriage as it existed in the past. This will be followed by an analysis of marital unions to-day and will include those factors affecting the choice of a mate and the rights and obligations stemming from the contracting of a marriage. Finally I shall conclude with a brief description of the developmental cycle of the elementary family.

For the purposes of this essay we define Tinkerdom as being a socio-cultural minority group, membership being granted only to those persons having at least one Tinker parent. A further qualification is necessary, namely that the individual concerned must identify himself with the group, otherwise he will not be considered a member. This dictum is necessary since a few persons with genealogical claims to affiliation have nevertheless sundered their ties with their fellows and become merged into the mass society. The Tinkers do not form a corporate group [2] but the fact that they share certain socio-cultural features including values and norms of behaviour, as well as having a consciousness of kind adds weight to the argument that they are more than a mere congerie of persons lumped together by outsiders. "Flatties"[3] have a tendency to group all nomads into the Tinker category, but this from the Tinker point of view is not acceptable, since as mentioned above they have rules defining those qualifying for membership and these are abided by very strictly. A few "Flatties" have adopted their way of life, and interact almost exclusively with members of the group, but nonetheless they are considered to be outsiders.

It is not my intention here to sketch out the history of the Tinkers in Scotland for two reasons. The first is that it has already been done quite creditably,[4] and the second that most historical data available are irrelevant to our theme. From time to time note will be taken of such information when it casts some

light on either marriage or the organisation of the elementary family. It should however be noted that Tinkers have been living in Scotland for many centuries. The date on which they disassociated themselves from other vagrants is unknown. The first fully authoritative document noting the presence of Gypsies in Scotland is dated July, 1505 (McRitchie 1894: 29). The relationship between Tinkers and Gypsies in the past is difficult to determine, but it is clear that many of the references to Scottish Gypsies in the literature do in fact refer to the group that are here called Tinkers. Scotland seems to have sheltered few real Gypsies in the past as well as at the present, probably for the reason given by McRitchie (1894: 19) "When they (the Gypsies) came they found an already existing caste of nomadic, magic working tinkers, pedlars, ballad singers, mountebanks, etc . . ., and either left or became affiliated with them". The implication of such a statement is that Tinkers or like groups existed in Scotland since before the beginning of the sixteenth century. There seems to be a substantial amount of evidence to back this contention, but since it is irrelevant to our subject there is no need to go into details here.

Most of the Tinkers in the past were nomadic, having no fixed place of residence. To-day this is no longer true, since the overwhelming majority have an abode to which they retire during the late Autumn, Winter and early Spring months. Their homes are usually in the slums of large cities, or in deteriorated cottages and sheds in the country or villages. The choice of domicile is largely dictated by their poverty and inability to pay high rents, and by the prejudice that landlords, as members of the "flattie" majority, have against Tinkers. Consequently decent housing is refused them. Some informants have obtained comfortable County Council Flats while a few have bought their own houses.

To attempt to estimate with any degree of accuracy the number of Tinkers to be found in Scotland is virtually impossible since the National Census does not differentiate them from the rest of the Scots. Censuses of the Tinker population were taken in 1895 and 1917,[5] but the results are of doubtful validity for reasons which I cannot enter into here. Spence (1955) using the National Census figures for 1951 estimates the number at about fourteen thousand, but includes vagrants and others with no fixed place of residence, who should not be considered as members of the group; he excludes those Tinkers who have become sedentary or semi-sedentary and should be

included. Vallée (1955: 12-13) makes no attempt to estimate their numbers while Donaldson (1956) writes that she believes the total to be from three to four thousand. It is not clear whether she is referring to those who are permanently nomadic or not. Her figure is probably reasonably accurate if she includes only the nomads, but our own very rough estimate is that there are from twenty to forty thousand Tinkers in all of Scotland, including nomads, semi-sedentary and permanently fixed persons who identify themselves and are accepted as members of the Tinker minority. Until further demographic work is done, no figure can be given which can be claimed to have any degree of real accuracy.

In this paper the terms "Marriage" and "Divorce" are used in the same way as the Tinkers do, that is without reference to the legality of either these unions or their dissolution. If a distinction must be made between either a marriage or divorce lawfully recognised and one not recognised by the state, the adjective "Legal" will be used to qualify the former type, i.e. "legal marriage", or "legal divorce".

I shall often be levelling criticisms against what has been written about these people in the past. It is my impression that much of the literature dealing with Tinkers as well as Gypsies is far from being reliable. The Tinkers meet enquiries from strangers either with stony silence, or with imaginative answers. Investigators in the past have often delved into the most intimate aspects of their lives without hesitation. In view of the suspicion with which Tinkers hold most "Flatties" it is not surprising that they often do their best to mislead the investigator. Also we must not forget that they are often rewarded for being willing to give information and they believe, quite rightly in most cases, that the more sensational their story the greater will be their recompense. The only way that one can avoid being misled is first to become well acquainted with them, and then and only then, begin one's investigation. Whenever possible one should check what has been said by observation. This can only be done if one lives on very close terms with them. Both my wife and I were told that this would entail many hardships and unpleasantness, but this is not true. Information dealing with the past can of course not be checked by observation, but if one has established good "rapport" with one's informants it is not likely that they will try to mislead. Nevertheless cross-checking by use of other informants is recommended.

Marriage in the Past

The first step in founding a family is taken when a marriage is contracted. The literature dealing with the Tinkers is full of descriptions of marriage rites performed by members of the group. Fittis (1881: 516), quoting Hall, says that a Tinker performing a marriage ceremony took a glass, broke it and said that, as it was impossible to put the glass together, so no man should tear the couple apart. Jamieson (1956: 183) cites an article from a newspaper which reports that Tinker marriages were conducted by a king, who mixed a handful of oatmeal and beremeal. Then he turned to the couple with the mixture and said: "Let them who can part this part you." Simson (1865: 260-1) describes in somewhat more detail a form of marriage ceremony. A wooden bowl is passed to the bride who urinates into it, and then handed to the groom for the same purpose. After this the "priest" takes some earth and mixes them all together. He hands the concoction to the bride and groom and tells them to separate the ingredients if they can. The couple are then ordered to hold hands over the bowl and in the "Gipsy language" the "priest" proclaims them man and wife. This ceremony was described to Simson by a "Gipsy" who claimed to have been married in this way (1865: 263). Another informant told him that the father of the groom had to sleep with the bride's mother for three or four nights before the marriage (1865: 264). McRitchie (1884: II, 285) and others state that jumping over the broomstick or tongs is popularly associated with Tinker marriages. All our informants claimed that no such ceremonies had ever been performed, or had been done for show purposes only. Tales of this kind are often spun to outsiders in the hope that the teller will be handsomely rewarded. It is also not improbable that ceremonies of this kind were carried out in front of a "Flattie" audience again in the hope of collecting money. But it is unlikely that the Tinkers attributed any significance to such rituals. McCormick (1907: 397), one of the most reliable authorities on the group, says that they go through but little ceremony at the time of a marriage, usually merely taking each other's word. Most authorities agree that in the past few Tinkers were married either in a church or Registry Office, but Crofton (1910: 290) found a recorded instance of a Tinker marriage having taken place in a church as early as 1749 at Dull; and Miller (1891-2: 61) records that a marriage ceremony had taken place in a cave near Rosemarkie and the English

marriage service had been read by an old Tinker. On the subject of church or Registry Office marriages most informants agreed that these were extremely rare in the past.

Informants told me that a couple who wished to marry would often leave the camp or other residence of their parents' without any ceremony being performed and upon their return would be treated as a married couple. In some cases the consent of both sets of parents would be asked, but this was usually no more than a mere formality since—if refused—the two would elope and present their kin with a "fait accompli" upon their return. I was told of one case where the bride was severely beaten by her father for running off in this way, but was nevertheless allowed to remain with her husband. The selection of a spouse was left entirely up to the individual and neither kinsmen nor anyone else ever attempted to arrange marriages for a third party.

If the pair asked permission before going off on their own, it was said to be the duty of their kin to supply them with the objects necessary to set up a camp. The basic requirements were a "float", a tent, bedding, cooking equipment and crockery, as well as any tools necessary for the carrying out of the husband's profession, if any. Finally and of greatest importance, a horse or other draft animal to pull the "float". The obligation to supply these articles did not fall exclusively on either the bride or groom's elementary family. By this is meant that the husband's kin were not expected to supply some specific objects and the wife's group others. Each supplied what it could. If the wife's family had or was in a position to obtain an extra horse and "float" they would do so, whereas if the groom's group were fortunate enough to have spare ones they would provide them. No attempt was made to balance out the value of the articles given by the two parties, nor did one lose status vis-à-vis the other if they were not able to provide so much as their counterparts. In the case of the bride's and groom's elementary families not being able to provide either any, or all, of the necessities, calls would be made on more distant kin. Usually close kin would be approached first, not merely because of the closeness of their genealogical ties but also because closer social ties would in all probability have been maintained with them and they therefore would be more likely to help. However, if one heard that a more distant kinsman or even a non-kinsman with whom social ties were maintained was known to be able to render material assistance

in such cases, they would be asked to do so, and would not refuse. To the best of my knowledge no proposed marriage was ever postponed because of the inability to obtain the necessary equipment for the pair to set up as an independent household. Children of poor parents sometimes set off on a life of their own with no more than a bit of torn canvas to sleep under, a blanket or two and a pot to cook in. Sometimes an old broken-down pram was added to carry their household effects.

In the case of elopements the parents of the pair would provide the necessities, as mentioned above, upon their return. The two would leave with their own possessions and perhaps a few things "borrowed" from their relatives.

The period during which the newly-weds would stay away varied from about a week to several months. Having the right household effects, if able to make a reasonable amount of money on their own, they might stay away for a considerable period of time. If, however, they had little, and their commercial enterprises were not prospering, the "honeymoon" might be brief.

Upon their return they would be recognised for the first time as husband and wife. A celebration would be held for them. Kinsmen who were in the neighbourhood as well as friends would be invited and welcomed. Food and drink would be provided by both sets of kinsfolk as well as being brought by those attending the feast. The duration of the celebration was almost entirely governed by the amount of food and drink available. Some lasted for only an afternoon and evening, while others went on for several days.

The young pair might now set off on a tour, to visit the camps of their relatives and friends who had not attended the celebration. Though not compulsory this was frequently done. There was no set order in which the visits should be made, rather it was a matter of convenience. If it was easier to see a distant cousin before a sibling, the latter had no justification for feeling hurt if this order was adopted. Nor did the bride's family have priority over that of the groom or vice versa. The couple might be offered gifts in cash or kind by those they visited, but only if the host's economic circumstances warranted such largesse.

In the case of a Tinker marrying a "Flattie" the procedure was practically the same, except that almost invariably the couple eloped. In spite of McCormick's statement to the

contrary (1907: 415), it is my impression that such unions were and still are common. Most informants had at least one "Flattie" grandparent if not more. That this is no recent phenomenon is shown both by the genealogies collected during the research and also from the literature. McRitchie (1894: 2) quotes the minister of Borthwick who said, in 1839, that in Midlothian the Tinkers or Gypsies had intermarried frequently with the local folk. Simson (1865: 9) makes the same comment and finally an anonymous author describing the Tinkers in the North of Scotland says that they often marry country girls who then take to the road (Anon. 1891-2: 128). Elopement was necessary since the kin of the "Flattie" would not condone such a union and often the Tinker's, too, would not approve. Upon the return of the pair they would be accepted into the Tinker group but not by the house-dwellers. Ties with the latter were severed. The majority of such out-group marriages were with persons of the very poor working class, and the pair adopted the Tinker way of life. This last was to be expected since the kin and friends of the "Flattie" who had so demeaned him-, or herself, by marrying a Tinker would consider him or her outside the pale, and he or she would become an outcast.

From what has been said above it is clear that marriages were the concern of the bride and groom alone, and that the interference of others was seldom tolerated. There was no ritual to solemnise most weddings since the act of living publicly together and leaving the group was considered enough to change the status of the two from single to married persons. Informants said that sometimes marriage rites were celebrated in a church, but these would take place only after the couple had been living together for some time, and the reason for undergoing such a marriage was often that money could be collected from the local house-dwellers.

Monogamy appears to have been the rule though we find mention of some polygynous Tinkers in the literature. Simson (1865: 200) mentions that one Jack Johnstone had several wives, as did certain chiefs of certain other bands. McCormick (1907: 84) states that Billy Marshall and his gang had polygynous habits and that Billy had as many as seven wives at one time (1907: 269). In both of these cases the reference was to the past, that is to say the authors were told that polygyny used to be an acceptable form of marriage, but was no longer so at the time of their enquiry. An even earlier report on Tinker

marriage practices is given by Sir George McKenzie (1669:148) who says: "The Tinkers are in effect vile persons, who are seldom if ever lawfully married", (by this he probably means that they were not wed in church or chapel) "there is an absurd custom amongst Tinkers to live promiscuously and use one another's wives as concubines". Andrew Lang (1908: 130) using McKenzie's statement, attempted to argue that this practice which he compared to the institution of Pirauru found among some Australian aborigines, might be a survival of group marriage or merely sexual license. No other reference to this institution is to be found in the literature and the present day Tinkers say that they know nothing about it. A single case of a plural marriage was reported to me, and this of a man with two wives one settled in a large city and the other living in a small village, but spending much of the year on the road with her own kinsmen. Apparently the husband divided his time between them. I met neither the husband nor the wives and hence no detailed investigation of the unions was possible. While the case was reported by a very good informant and confirmed by another, others said that they knew the individuals concerned and denied that the man was married to both. They argued that the second, the town dwelling woman was not a wife, but merely a concubine and that the relationship was a temporary one. In any case it appears that if polygynous marriages were allowed in the past they were infrequent and today they are almost, if not completely, unknown.

Those who have written about the Tinkers in the past have often stressed the fact that for the most part marriages were of long duration. In all the descriptions of the marital ceremonies it is stated that no person should try and break a marriage. While, as mentioned above, it is doubtful that these so-called marriage rites had any real significance the ideal that unions should be permanent arrangements is nonetheless expressed in them. McCallum (Report 1895: 49) while being otherwise highly critical of the Tinkers says that couples remain together for a long time. Other authorities have made the same statement. Our informants argued that in the past divorce was very uncommon and that most unions were for life. Though this was the ideal, some genealogical and other data lead me to believe that it was not always lived up to. But unfortunately the information on this subject is so sparse that it is impossible to come to any definite conclusion on the stability of Tinker marriages in the past.

According to the information collected during my investigation, no more ritual was necessary for a divorce than for a marriage. Simson (1865: 137 and 270-1) says that Tinkers divorce over a sacrificed horse and this has been repeated by other writers. McCormick (1907: 282-3) however doubts that this practice existed. When enquiries were made about this rite, informants roared with laughter, saying that a horse was far too valuable to be killed on such occasions. Rather, I was told, if one or both spouses wished to separate they would merely begin to live apart, this act being enough to signify a divorce. In most cases the reason for taking such action was that one of the spouses had become enamoured of another. He or she would then set up a camp with the latter, the result being not only a divorce, but a new marriage. If the deserted spouse was the husband, he might attempt to take his wife back by force. If her lover was not strong enough himself, or did not have enough supporters to fend off the first husband, he would lose his newly acquired wife to her husband and himself receive a beating. The runaway wife in a case of this kind would be soundly thrashed. However if she were determined to leave her spouse, further attempts would be made. A deserted wife might attack her ex-husband or his newly acquired wife, but it would be unlikely that she could make him return to her. Some cases were recorded of an abandoned spouse instigating her kinsmen to beat the husband but no instances of his being made to return to her were cited by informants.

Marriage To-day

Having discussed Tinker marriages in the past we can now turn our attention to present day marriages with only occasional references to the past.

No clear patterns of courtship were discovered. In some cases young persons indulge in pre-marital intercourse. While some parents disapprove of this, others do not. However girls are warned against being promiscuous, and instances were reported to us of girls being whipped by either their mother or father, usually the former, for being too loose with their favours. In the past, according to some informants, girls were expected to be virgins at the time of their first marriage, but this is apparently no longer the case. Simson's contention (1865: 257 and 261) that girls should be virgins at such a time, and that they were made to pass a test to establish the fact, seems to bear out what I was told. Young girls are not closely watched

by their parents to-day and it is more or less taken for granted that they will have had some sexual experience before marriage.

Marriages often take place at a relatively early age. A boy of twenty and a girl of sixteen or seventeen are said to be old enough to wed. Cases have been recorded of the bridegroom being sixteen and his mate fifteen or less, but such instances are becoming very rare. Permanent celibacy is considered abnormal. Two male informants, one about thirty-five and the other thirty-four, were single. The older of the two said that he would never marry, since he wished to look after his mother. It is doubtful that this is the real reason since his mother is a very capable middle-aged woman and quite able to care for herself; she makes a much larger contribution towards the maintenance of the household than does her son. His friends said that he was too lazy to take care of a wife and family and had never shown any interest in girls. The other is the son of a very jealous mother who completely dominates him. On one occasion when he was slightly intoxicated we discussed his problems. Emboldened by drink, he said that he was anxious to get married and was looking for a potential spouse, even though his mother complained bitterly every time that he was seen with an eligible girl. The two bachelors were quite frequently subjects of conversation among the Tinkers, the majority expressing their belief that they were "crazy" not to get married and found a family.

Parents and other kinsfolk continue to-day, as a general rule, not to exert any influence on an individual's choice of a mate. Now as in the past, often the permission of parents is asked, but this is a mere formality since they will hesitate to interfere for fear that the two will elope. During the period of research the son of one of my best informants who was just eighteen announced that he wanted to marry a sixteen year old girl in four weeks' time. The two sets of parents were opposed, arguing that the two were too young to know their own minds. Nevertheless no attempt was made to block the marriage and the ceremony was held in the Registrar's Office three and a half weeks after the young man had announced his plans. The kinsfolk of both were present and a celebration was held afterwards. In another case, the parents refused their consent and the wedding was postponed. The bride's parents were very much opposed inasmuch as they said that her boy-friend was a drunkard and a wastrel, and that they would refuse their permission until their daughter reached the age of twenty-one.

On her twenty-first birthday she reminded them of their promise to agree to her union and they continued trying to have it postponed. The result was that the two eloped. Faced with the "fait accompli" when we last saw the parents they were arranging a legal marriage. This case is unusual since the parents were able to block the wedding for a long period. Partly this was a result of the fact that the solidarity of the elementary family of the bride was very great. Also her parents were very wealthy according to Tinker standards and therefore the groom did not press the girl too much since he hoped to obtain some financial aid from his father-in-law, were he not to appear to be flaunting his wishes too brazenly.

In many cases to-day, as in the past, conjugal life begins without the parents of either of the pair being informed. Two of our friends were married on New Year's eve in Blairgowrie some years ago. Both families lived in the same town. They arranged in secret for the local minister to unite them and when their parents came home from the local cinema they were informed of the event . . . Apparently no animosity was felt by anyone. The two had followed the traditional pattern, but used a relatively new idiom by having their union sanctified by the minister at the outset.

There is a definite increase in the number of legal marriages among the Tinkers. The two World Wars and the introduction of the Welfare State have played major roles in stimulating this trend. During the two wars quite a number of Tinkers were taken into the Armed Forces. It was very much easier for wives to collect family allowances and other government-granted help if they were able to show documents proving a legal marriage to a serviceman. This was often essential since many of those who were in charge of the distribution of such benefits were very much prejudiced against members of the group and went to great lengths to avoid satisfying their just claims. During the Second World War many Tinkers regularised their marital status. One, who had been living with his wife for twenty-four years and had had seven children by her, married in 1940 when he thought that he might be called up for military service. Other informants were also married at this time. To-day many marry legally since they are well aware that obtaining National Assistance, National Insurance, Family Allowance and other like grants will be facilitated. Within the group itself no distinction is made between those who are legally married and those who are not. Legal marriage cannot

be considered a symbol of social status. It might be possible to use it as an indication of the degree of acculturation to the *mores* of the larger society, but I have too little data to affirm this categorically. It would have been difficult in the extreme to determine how many of my informants were legally married and how many were not. Direct enquiries would have been deemed in the worst possible taste, and would have led either to lies or refusals to answer. Nevertheless some data on the subject were obtained by indirect means. Not infrequently I was told, always in the strictest confidence, that "so and so" were not legally married. While it would be possible to tabulate this data, it is not worthwhile doing so since it would give a
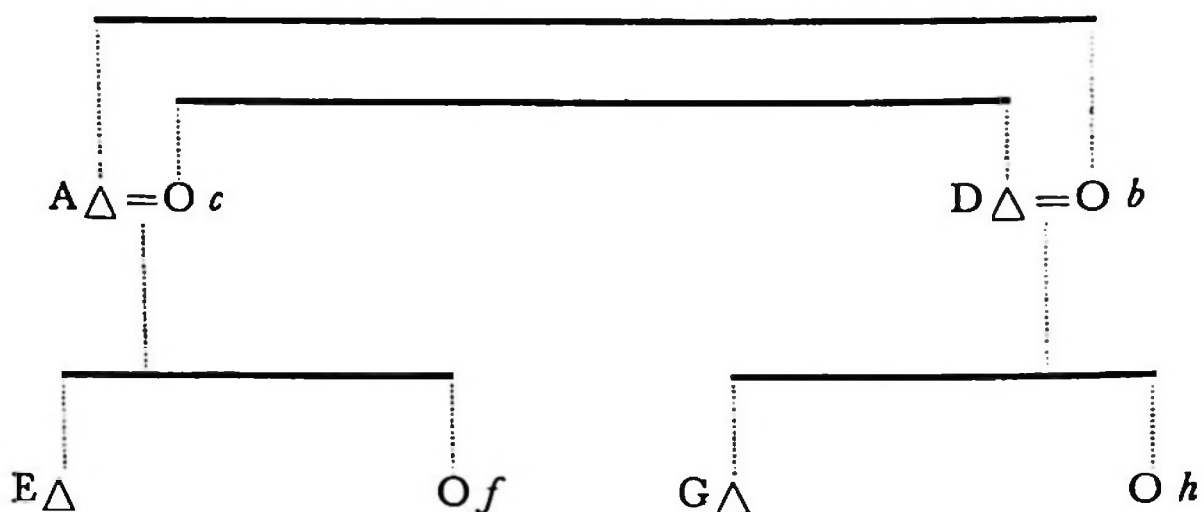
In this diagram a triangle is used to represent a male and a circle a female. The horizontal lines link siblings and the symbol = means marriage. A and b are siblings as well as c and D. A and c, and D and b are married couples. E and f are the children of A and c, while G and h are the offspring of D and b.

distorted view. The reason being that individuals often told me that persons with whom they were angry at the time were not "really married", but they would not make the reciprocal comment that a person had been wed according to the law of the land. It would, of course, have been very undiplomatic to check these allegations. The fact that the subject was considered to be worthy of gossip seems to imply that our previous statement that the Tinkers made no distinction between the two types of marriage is false. However, it must be remembered, informants assumed that I shared the normal "Flattie" values, that is believed living together outside of wedlock was a sin and by saying their enemy was not really married, they hoped he would fall in my esteem.

The Tinkers, unlike the majority of the Scottish population, do not deprecate close kin marriages, quite the contrary.

Many instances of unions between first cousins as well as double cousins were recorded and many informants told us that such marriages were better, for reasons to be discussed below, than marriages outside of the kin group. No distinction is made between cross and parallel cousins. The diagram opposite shows what is meant by "double cousins".

In the diagram E and f are double cousins of G and h since their tie is both through their mother and father. My records show that marriages between such categories of kin were and still are common, though perhaps less so to-day than in the past. The factors which favour this type of union are clear.

The first is a structural one. Tinker local groups are primarily composed of close kinsmen, usually a number of families whose heads are either siblings or the offspring of siblings. Feuds between local groups are common and not infrequently of long standing. Feuds between individuals spread to include the local group of the original antagonists. It is essential that the sense of solidarity of the local unit be strong and that pressures from outside do not weaken it. If E or G were to marry outsiders they would become intimately involved with an outside group, and if the members of the latter group or of one allied to them were to become embroiled in a feud with their own, their allegiance might be divided, and that of their spouses certainly would be. This then would weaken the feeling of solidarity within the group and make them less able to resist outside aggression. Or, in other words, such marriages play an important role in strengthening the local unit.

It is true that from the individual's and the local group's point of view exogamous marriages would tend to increase the number of their ties and add to the number of their alliances, but only on infrequent occasions would the husband's and the wife's groups be in a position to support each other. They would rarely, if ever, travel side by side since, as we have said, those who remain together are siblings or offspring of siblings. Hence in case of urgent need the affinal group would be of no help, being far away. One can say then that first cousin or double cousin marriages while minimising the size and number of linked groups, in fact strengthen the ties within the local and most essential structural groups. These unions are used as a means of reinforcing and perpetuating close ties within them.

Another factor tending to make local groups endogamous

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is that most Tinkers, contrary to the common belief, are wont to confine their wanderings to fairly restricted areas, which were previously occupied by their ancestors. Hence most contacts would be with close kin, and adolescents arriving at a marriageable age would be acquainted mainly with those living in the same areas as themselves. Relationships between groupings inhabiting an area are for the most part of two kinds: kinship or feuding. It is unlikely that young people of feuding groups would fall in love, partly because they would have few occasions to meet informally and secondly because they would have been told since childhood of the evilness of the enemy group and therefore would probably not wish to associate with them. The fact that two groups have a hereditary feud does not mean that they fight whenever they meet, but rather that they try and avoid each other and, when possible, attempt to bring harm to the opposing group. Even to-day when the Tinkers are forced to settle on large campsites or live within the same neighbourhood as an enemy group, they are constantly on the alert, lest the latter group should attempt to do them some injury. Fights sometimes break out.

To-day such close kin marriages seem to be somewhat less frequent than in the past. There are a number of reasons for this. First and foremost this change stems from the fact that to-day the need of an individual for supporters is less great than in the past. Whereas in as late a period as just before the Second World War the police had a tendency to ignore fighting between members of the group, to-day this is not so often true. Members of the police force in both Aberdeenshire and Perthshire have told me that until very recently they would not interfere in Tinkers' battles unless these were in a very public place and risked injury to other peoples' lives and property. To-day the police intervene whenever possible, therefore fighting is less common and no such imperative need is felt for having strong and reliable supporters nearby at all times.

Another reason for the change is that in the past the Tinkers rarely, if ever, turned to organs of the government to obtain justice: hence they needed a strong united group to support them. The police and law courts were avoided and it was almost unthinkable for a Tinker to appeal to them in a dispute with a fellow Tinker. There have been exceptions to this rule, one as early as in 1671 when the Shaws charged a group of Faws and Grays with robbery (Anonymous 1927: 70), but

these were few and far between. Even to-day there is a reluctance to turn to the state in order to gain protection and a redress of wrongs, but such occasions occur with greater frequency. One of my informants, for example, charged a fellow Tinker with stealing the battery of his car. The accused was convicted and sent to jail. The plaintiff felt guilty about his action, but in conversation attempted to justify it by saying that the thief was giving a bad name to the group as a whole by his behaviour and hence it was best that he be punished and perhaps reform.

Still a further reason for change in this respect is that resulting from the greater mobility of Tinkers to-day. As mentioned above, in the past the area in which a group would travel was small; to-day with the adoption of motor cars and the difficulty found in making a living, they tend to travel more widely. Therefore the contacts of a younger Tinker are no longer limited to kinsmen and enemy groups. He has a larger group of acquaintances from which to choose a spouse.

Another significant change to be found to-day in the pattern of marriage is the increase in the number of unions with "Flatties". We mentioned earlier that such unions have always taken place, but the incidence seems to be increasing by leaps and bounds. Many informants who had settled in Aberdeen had chosen to wed "Flatties". Those who, while single, have accepted jobs in the fishing and other industries, where most of their co-workers are "Flatties", have often married into this group. Those who refuse to adopt the attitude of the larger society towards stable employment, that is do not take up steady jobs but continue in the same occupations as their fathers, tend to find fellow group members as spouses. In the less anonymous environment of the small towns and villages unions between "Flatties" and Tinkers are very much less common. In one such settlement two Tinkers, one a male and the other a female, had married outside the group, but this was considered unusual and had some serious repercussions which cannot be gone into here.

The attitude of members towards "Flattie"-Tinker marriages varies enormously. The more conservative element believe such unions to be bad, it often being said that it is very difficult for the couple to get along well together because of their differences in background. Others said that it was a good thing to marry out, giving as a reason that if this were done with great frequency the Tinker group would die out and their

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descendants would not suffer from the widespread anti-Tinker prejudice.

Marriage is the first step taken by a young couple in founding an elementary family of their own, that is to say their family of procreation. This new social unit is expected to be independent. In the past they were given their own tent and necessary household equipment and, though often living in the camp of one or both sets of parents, they nonetheless formed an independent production and consumption unit. To-day the ideal is for them to obtain an abode of their own, though this is often impossible due to the housing shortage as well as their economic condition. Residence may have to be taken up with either the bride's or groom's parents. It is said to be better for them to move in with the bride's family since a woman has more duties within the house and, in the performance of these, she is thrown into constant contact with the other residents. Less friction is likely to arise if she lives with her own relatives than with her in-laws. However, as many Tinker families live in extremely crowded conditions this is not always possible and not infrequently the newly married pair must move into the groom's family's house. Conflict does not always arise in cases of this sort, but observation leads me to believe that on the whole uxorilocal settlement is more satisfactory than virilocal.

The individual statuses of the newly-weds are considerably changed by marriage. Previously they were subordinates in their family of orientation and under the authority of their parents. For example, if an unmarried man works with his father at any of the numerous jobs that Tinkers perform, the father would take the lion's share of the profits, allowing only a small part to his unmarried son or sons. If after marriage the association continues, the profits are divided more or less equally between the two. This partly results from the father's recognition of his son's new responsibilities, but also of his having reached adult status. Even more marked is the case of a girl working alongside her mother in hawking, begging, collecting rags, etc. While unmarried the girl has no claim to the profits, but when she has a husband, her share is equal to that of her mother. Of course before marriage both son's and daughter's needs will be taken care of, out of the income of the parental elementary family, thus their monetary wants are not so great; once married this is no longer the case.

Before discussing in some detail the allocation of roles

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within the Tinker elementary family I shall briefly mention some of the rights and obligations of spouses arising out of their marriage, since these have no small effect on the inter-action between husband and wife and hence on the total role system.

A husband has exclusive sexual rights in respect of his wife. A woman is expected to remain faithful to her spouse as long as she is married. A wife may be beaten by her husband if found to have a lover and none will interfere since it is considered to be a just punishment for an infraction of the rules.

A husband has equally the right to expect that his wife will prepare food for him, except when she is menstruating or immediately after childbirth. Many informants said that a woman should not cook for men during her menstrual periods, but not all agreed. In the past this was a universally held belief and a woman who ignored the proscription was punished and in some cases divorced. The length of time after childbirth during which a woman is forbidden to cook for men is not clearly defined. McCormick (1907: 297) was told by informants that a young mother could not cook for several weeks after having given birth to a child. The period given by informants varied from one week to forty days. The reasons for these prohibitions is not clear. Usually informants merely said that at these times women were not "clean" but it was not possible to discover what was believed to be the result if the rules were broken.

Women are expected to look after the house or camp. From limited observation it appears as if it is usually the task of the wife to put up the tent and prepare the bedding.

A wife should equally make a contribution towards the running expenses of the household. "Flatties" often say that Tinker men do not work and that they rely on their women's labour for support. I was not infrequently told by outsiders that one of the marriage stipulations was that the wife must alone undertake to maintain her husband and family (See also Crofton 1910: 289). This is not true. The discussion of the man's obligations towards his wife and family will show the falsity of this allegation. Nonetheless a wife is expected to bring money into the group and to the best of my knowledge only the wife of one of my informants did no remunerative work, and this partly because the husband's income was quite high; he was unusual in not wanting her to indulge in the usual economic activities of the Tinker women. Other men, as rich or richer

than this man, allowed their wives to work when they wished, and all seemed anxious to do so.

Both men and women appear to be extremely fond of children; it is said to be the duty of a wife to bear offspring, the more the better. One of the more common reasons for divorce is childlessness. If a couple are unable to bear children and cannot find one or more to adopt, they will probably separate each finding a new spouse, with the hope that children will result from the new unions.

A wife may expect that her husband will be faithful to her, but she will be unable to marshall much sympathy should he on rare occasions be known to have relations with other women. I have heard of women leaving their husbands on this account, but in most cases this was only after they had been betrayed many a time.

A husband is expected to help his wife with household expenses if she is not able to provide all herself. In the past he provided and maintained the tent, horses and float. To-day the husband is responsible for the purchase and maintenance of a car as well as camping equipment. His income is also spent on recreation and he often pays the rent. While this division of financial responsibility between husband and wife is the usual one, quite frequently if one of the two partners have not been successful in their ventures the other will come to his aid. For example wives who have had a good week will often help their husbands with the rent, if the latter has not done so well, and vice versa.

The husband is also his wife's protector. In view of the strong prejudice held by outsiders it is perhaps surprising that attempts are often made by "Flattie" males to molest Tinker women in camps. A man must be constantly on his guard, especially at night against such foul play. During the time when my wife and I were camping out with members of the group, there were at least three occasions on which strangers came into the camp in the evening and left only when they saw men emerging from the tents.

A full discussion of the division of labour would require an exhaustive description of the various types of occupations that members of the group follow. For reasons of space this is not possible here,[6] so a few general statements relevant to this subject will be made.

In all societies there is a fixed division of labour along the lines of sex and age. This division usually is such that it plays

an important part in reinforcing the unity of the elementary family by making the roles of both males and females complementary. In our own society for example the man is, generally speaking, expected to earn the money needed to maintain his family of procreation, while the woman looks after the home and takes care of the children. If one of the adults of the family is lost to it through death or divorce the group is imperilled. Among Tinkers the division of labour too contributes to strengthening the ties of the elementary family, but to a lesser degree than in many other groups. This is because the wife not only plays the housekeeping role, but also is expected to contribute to the maintenance of the group. The overwhelming majority do outside work for money. A few in Aberdeen have regular jobs, but none in Blairgowrie. Those who do not have steady employment go out hawking, begging, doing temporary farm work, etc. The man too earns money, but unlike the case in our society the family is not entirely dependent upon his earnings. Without a wife and mother the elementary family finds it difficult to survive, but it can do so without too much difficulty without the support of the husband if it does not include a great many children.

While the ideal is for the husband to be the head of the houschold, his spouse often plays the dominant role. Males are often said to be irresponsible: this is why the wives sometimes assume authority. This often occurs when the family is ambitious and wishes to improve its economic position. Almost all Tinkers in Blairgowrie who have managed to save enough money to invest capital in berry-fields have done so as a result of making the wife treasurer of the family. Males are reported not to be able to save anything, and observation seems to bear this out. They love to entertain their friends and often spend considerable amounts doing so. Whereas women, as a general rule, seem to be more careful about financial matters. Perhaps this is because, as children, girls are given more responsibility than their brothers. Girls from about six onwards are put in charge of their younger siblings. When a bit older they are quite often made responsible for the cooking of the family's meals, this either when their mother is out working, having her menstrual periods, or with a new-born infant. A son might also be allotted these chores but only if there were no girl of the right age to perform them. The standards set for him would not be so high as those for a girl. Girls are expected to help their mothers more in their outside work than sons their

fathers. Daughters are made to feel that they have an important part to play in the maintenance of their own family group at a much earlier age than their brothers: a sense of responsibility is drummed into them which is not so much the case with boys.

Men are often aware of the predominant role played by their wives in the context of the nuclear family. Unwilling to admit it to others, one often hears a group of men, when no women are present, boasting about the authority that they exercise over their wives and families. This as well as other signs of hostility towards members of the opposite sex are often manifested. These are, I believe, symbolic of their feeling of insecurity. Men often say that women are frivolous, spend-thrifts and willing to break up their marriages at the slightest provocation. They will ascribe these characteristics to the female sex but exclude their own spouses. Neither my wife nor I being trained psychologists, I am unable to do more than merely mention these facts.

I now propose to sketch some of the stages through which the elementary family passes from the time of its birth to its eventual extinction. There is a normal developmental cycle through which families pass, the changes being brought about by birth, marriage, divorce and death of its members.

The first important event in the life of the nuclear family after its inception is the birth of a child. Births often take place in isolated camps, without the help of trained midwives or doctors. In Aberdeen a tendency for some of the Tinkers to have their children in the hospital was noted, but this is a very recent development. In the past and still to-day most mothers are delivered by older women. I was told that for her first pregnancy the wife will prefer to go to the camp or house of her mother if this is possible, and in most cases the child will be born among his mother's relatives, which is often the practice for subsequent births as well. No specifically Tinker ritual is performed on this occasion.

Members of the group like to have their children baptised and often go to great lengths to have this ritual carried out. Many ministers and priests refuse to baptise Tinker children while others are not amenable to performing the rite unless one or both parents are members of their church. Since very few of the group belong to a congregation, it is rather difficult for them to have their children baptised. This is not a new phenomenon. It is reported by the author of an anonymous article that the minister of Yetholm told him that the Tinkers

took all their children across the border to be baptised as the Scottish Church would not receive them because of their "heathen" origin (Anonymous 1861: 70). Simson says that the Lochgellie Tinkers had their children baptised but when the clergy refused they did it themselves; he adds that there was much feasting and drinking on this occasion (1865: 183). Bailie Smith (Daranes 1934: 202) is quoted as writing that they believed it unlucky to have an unbaptised child and put themselves to the trouble to attend church to qualify as sponsors. The baptism was followed by great festivities. If the minister refused, he continues, they did it themselves.[7] Informants told me that unless a child was baptised it would not grow well. The ritual is looked upon more as a magical than a religious one. In most cases it is not seen to be one which affiliates the child with a church. Often to-day they must travel quite far to find a priest or minister who is willing, but I have not heard of any member of the group performing the rite for a child. My suggestion that this might have happened in the past was laughed to scorn. To-day rarely do festivities follow the event, though some said that this was the custom in the past.

The coming of a child is important to the marriage since it tends to strengthen the union. Previously the marriage was looked upon at least to a certain degree as a trial. As mentioned above childlessness is a very common cause of separation. As more and more children are born the bond becomes tighter. One reason for this is that the economic needs of the family are greater and contributions from both parents are necessary to maintain it. A woman can in fact support one or two children by herself, but this is almost impossible for her to do when they become more numerous. As the number of children multiply one or more of them will be handed over to either the mother's or the father's parents or both to look after. At first I thought that this was done to free the wife of some of her burdens, but this is not the main reason. Grandparents are normally anxious and eager to rear at least one of their grandsons if it is at all possible. Tinkers will say that these quasi-adoptions take place so that the children will be able to provide assistance for the aged pair, but this is not a fully satisfactory explanation for two reasons. Firstly it is usually boys who are given and they are much less useful than girls, and secondly the child is only slightly over a year when handed over. In fact the answer given me by several grandparents to explain this custom seems to me to be the most probable reason, i.e. that a family without

children is a sadly deprived group and that they alone bring gaiety. Especially when old, one needs to have youngsters around to avoid loneliness and to retain "joie de vivre".

It is not only persons of the grandparental generation who love children. All the Tinkers I met seemed to be extremely fond of them and wanted to have as many as possible. When my wife and I made new acquaintances almost the first question asked of us was "How long have you been married? . . ." Once we had told them, they followed by inquiring: "How many children have you? . . ."; and when we answered "None!" they would almost invariably express what appeared to be heartfelt sympathy and concern.

Large families appear to have been the rule in the past. Many informants have seven, eight or even more siblings. In Aberdeen two women still living were said to have each borne twenty children; in one case eighteen survived, and in the other sixteen lived to become adults. To-day the majority still hope to have large families. I failed to discover any who resorted to contraceptive practices, but if any do they are obviously a small minority. Most informants said that they wished to have at least six. This attitude towards progeniture is shown by the reaction of parents towards a daughter bearing an illegitimate child. Single girls do on occasion bring forth children and neither the mother nor child bears any lasting stigma. Fathers and/or mothers have been known to beat their daughters when they learn that they have become pregnant, but for the most part the news is taken calmly. No attempt is made, nor is it necessary in order to save the reputation of the girl, to arrange a speedy marriage. If the father is known he will not be pressed to marry the young woman nor will he have any claims or obligations towards the child, unless of course he marries its mother. Illegitimate children are usually brought up by their maternal grandparents, though in a number of recorded instances the eventual husband of the mother will insist that they join the elementary family as a full member.

With but one exception all the writers who have dealt with the problem of the Tinkers have noted the extreme affection felt by parents towards their offspring. The Reverend McCallum (Report 1895: 216-17), the exception, said that Tinker children are often ill-used and parents neglect their duty towards them. Others, including the Chief Constable of Perthshire (Report 1895: 210), Simson (1865: 359) disagree. McCormick (1909-10: 233) quotes a Medical Officer of Health: "Tinkers are most

attentive and kind to their children, and an object lesson to many others". Elsewhere McCormick (1907: 347-8) writes that he was much impressed by the kindness of women towards their children. The representative of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Perthshire told me that he very much approved of the way the Tinkers treated their children. The trouble that he and his society had with the group arose when the parents were too poor to feed and clothe their offspring properly, but he hastened to add that he had encountered several cases of parents going hungry so that their children would have enough. Problems might arise also if the parents are alcoholics. Public opinion to the contrary, there are few alcoholics among the Tinkers. Some do become inebriated from time to time, but I doubt that if statistics were available they would show that the Tinkers drink more than the average Scotsman. Not a few of them are teetotallers.

The Tinkers believe in bringing up their children in a very permissive way. They are very critical of the "Flatties" who, they say, are harsh and frequently resort to corporal punishment. This sanction is rarely practised by members of the group. On one occasion a mother whipped her son who was about twelve years old with a belt, after he had been misbehaving atrociously for a very long time, and refused categorically to do what he was told. While the onlookers did not interfere, most were critical of the mother's action, even though they agreed that the boy had been acting in a most unpleasant manner. On another occasion I was present when an aggravated father spanked his seven year old son, again after much provocation. These were the only two occasions when such actions were taken in my presence even though many is the time when children acted in a way that would have resulted in swift and serious punishment in the average "Flattie" household. Let me give an example of what I mean. One afternoon my wife and I went out to visit the camp of one of our friends. He was busily at work making a wooden dashboard for a lorry that he had just bought and was hoping to sell that evening. After carefully cutting the wood into the proper shape he entered the cab of the lorry to make some final measurements. A group of children including his own came by, began to play with the dashboard and broke it . . . Our friend rushed out of the lorry and shouted at them . . . He quickly calmed down and set about making another one, a task which occupied him fully for about forty-five minutes.

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When nearly completed he laid it down again, walked away a few yards and again it was broken by the children. Again he shouted at them and then began making still a third. This time he was more careful and the children did not have the opportunity to play with, and break it. After the children had spoiled his work for the second time we asked him why he did not punish them and his answer was that they were only "bairns", and did not know any better. We often saw youngsters disobeying their parents and only rarely did the latter do more than merely shout at them. A casual observer might be misled into thinking that the Tinkers are harsh disciplinarians were he to listen to and believe their threats. A camp often echoes to the cry of: "I'll skelp youze", "I'll kill you", or "Wait till I get my hands on youze", but threats are rarely carried out!

Vallée (1955) writes that the concepts of shame and approval are employed to a far greater extent than those of good and evil among the Tinkers, and that their offspring are reproved in terms of how others will react to their behaviour. When a stranger, that is a "Flattie" is on the scene, children are told to be on their best behaviour, and if one misbehaves such statements as "What will the gentleman think of you" will be heard. But if only Tinkers, or others they know very well are present, the shame sanction is not brought into play.

The young are not only allowed much freedom but they are well treated in other respects. If money is short the bairns must be well-fed even though the parents are forced perhaps to go on short rations. Most parents are far more concerned with seeing to it that their offspring are warmly clad than they are about themselves. Some families take what are little less than heroic measures to make sure that their children are kept clean. One family forced to move without sound reason to a damp and marshy area by the police, being evicted from all the drier sites they had found, would change the clothes of their young infants at least three times a day in an effort to keep them tidy.

The Tinkers have a very selective attitude towards the education of children. They deem it an advantage to learn to read and write and to have some notions of basic arithmetic. The rest of what is taught is said to be useless. Only two informants said that they hoped to send their offspring to school beyond the statutory school-leaving age, and many complained that the government had just lengthened the period of compulsory attendance in Scotland by one year. The exceptions were one mother of a thirteen year old girl

who had been doing very well in class; she hoped that her daughter would enter the University and eventually become a school teacher. The father of the girl and the rest of the members of her elementary family seemed to be agreeable to such a proposal but not overly enthusiastic. The second exception was again a mother who hoped that her four and a half year old son would one day become a physician. Her spouse showed no interest in the mother's dreams. All informants who had attended school stayed no longer than was necessary according to the law, and many had been able to avoid its strictures. Typical of the young people's attitude was a girl who in three months was to reach the age at which she could legally leave school: she said that the day before her birthday would be the last on which she would attend, not one day more.

Even before the period of schooling is over Tinker children can make important contributions to the family economy. The law allows the children of nomads the privilege of attending school only half as frequently as those of settled persons. That is to say that they only need to be recorded as having two hundred attendances a year, the morning and afternoon sessions being recorded as one each. The result being that they go only approximately one hundred days a year instead of the normal two hundred. Almost all informants claimed this right for their children, and when not in school these often assisted parents in their economic pursuits.

The elementary family begins to shrink in size as the children reach marriageable age. It has already been said that upon marriage, ideally, a person leaves his family of orientation and sets up his own independent family of procreation. Later on accretions to the group in the form of grandchildren will tend to increase its size until its final disappearance.

The nuclear family may disappear in either of two ways. Divorce leads automatically to its extinction. There are no clear cut rules regulating the allocation of children in such cases. To the best of my knowledge none of my informants had ever resorted to the courts in order to obtain a legal divorce even if legally married, which would of course have resulted in the courts deciding upon the problems of the guardianship of the offspring of the pair. Small infants almost always remain with their mothers, while older children may either be divided up between the two or be allowed to choose for themselves. It is more common for boys to remain with their fathers, and for girls to follow their mothers. The eventual result is that in

most cases such children will be brought up by their grandparents, girls by those of their maternal, and boys by those of their paternal line.

Death of one of the spouses also results in the disappearance of the nuclear family. The widow or widower retains control of the children. If young enough, he or she will remarry after six months' time or more. The six months' period is one of mourning, and should a marriage take place before the time has elapsed criticism would ensue, but no attempt would be made to postpone the union.

The spouse alone has claims on the deceased's property unless a will has been left, but since wills are virtually never made by Tinkers, according to their own customs no other person can put in a claim on the estate of the deceased. A husband alone also inherits his wife's property. Unlike the Gypsies who are reported to burn all, or most of the property of the dead person, this is a very rare occurrence among the Tinkers. Vessey-Fitzgerald (1944: 101) states that the Scots Tinkers do not make extensive sacrifices at funerals, but sometimes burn the clothes of the dead (See also Pringle 1817: 57). Informants have told me that in the past clothes as well as other belongings of the dead person might be destroyed, but that this custom was dying out. If the clothes were in good enough condition they would be sold. No member of the family would wish to keep and wear them. A few years ago a family in Aberdeen burnt the horse-drawn cart of a man who had just died. This was regarded as an acceptable practice by members of the group, but considered foolish by virtually all.

In this paper the aim has been to describe the institution of Tinker marriage as well as the organisation of the elementary family. Due to limitations of space it has not been possible to deal with the structural implications of many of their practices or to attempt a preliminary analysis of the Tinker social structure. A paper dealing with this subject is being prepared.

It appears from this paper that, in spite of the fact that fantastic *mores* are attributed to the Tinkers, their customs are in no way extraordinary. Rather we find that in many respects they seem to differ but little from those of the working class Scots. It would be interesting to compare the institutions and customs of the two groups but this is not possible for two reasons: 1. the study carried out by the author was limited to the Tinker population; 2. little systematic research has been done on the Scottish working class.

NOTES

[1] It is only with much hesitation that I use the term Tinker in this essay since members of the group are extremely sensitive about it and dislike it. Ultimately I decided to adopt it only because its referent is widely known and hence will cause less difficulty for the reader than any other term which might have been chosen. The members of the group should realise that it is written here with none of the usual pejorative connotations.

The data on which this paper is based were gathered during approximately eight months of field-work in Perthshire and Aberdeenshire. The research was financed by the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh, and supervised by Dr. K. Little. I wish to express my sincere thanks to both as well as to Hamish Henderson Esq. who facilitated entry into Tinker society; to my wife who did much of the research, and finally to the Tinkers with whom my wife and I spent a most pleasant period. Their hospitality and kindness knew no bounds.

[2] I use the term "corporate group" in the same way as does Radcliffe-Brown when he says: "A group may be spoken of as 'corporate' when it possesses any one of a certain number of characters: if its members, or its adult male members, or a considerable proportion of them come together occasionally to carry out some collective action, for example, the performance of rites; if it has a chief or council who are regarded as acting as the representatives of the group as a whole; if it possesses or controls property which is collective—" (Radcliffe-Brown 1950:41).

[3] "Flatties" is a cant word used to refer to most non-Tinkers.

[4] The best history of the Tinkers is to be found in McRitchie (1894). Simson is far less satisfactory and reliable. McCormick (1907) is a fair source for historical information. Other publications, too numerous to list here, contribute to a greater or lesser degree to our knowledge of the history of this group.

[5] The census of 1895 is included in "The Report etc. . . .", 1895; the 1917 enumeration is "Report etc. . . .", 1918.

[6] A paper on this subject is being prepared for publication.

[7] For a discussion of the validity of lay baptism, see Hooker n.d.:251.

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