Notes toward construction of new SCCS codes for marriage payments and inheritance.

General commentary:
This recode is based on a specific set of definitions, some of which will diverge from those used in the ethnographic references. And, they may differ from conventional usages, such as your own. Wherever “please list, explain or other blanks: ________________________” are provided, always give page numbers and use extra pages as needed. Please (X ) check each ( ) that applies to this case only: ________________________________SCCS Name, #(     ) . For your best choice of sources, choose only from those under III, below.

I. Locating wealth assets in the society.

A. With the exception of ( ) hunter-gatherers in extremely resource deficit environments, there will be some form of wealth-asset. I know of no case with more than two:

A( )B( ) Fertility (common in matrilineal systems)
A( )B( ) Fertility & territory (common to matrilineal and agrarian systems and to non-agrarian patrilineal systems where men are important as warriors)
A( )B( ) Animal stock (where territory is almost never an additional wealth-asset)
A( )B( ) Capital (which will not be a factor in this recode).

B. In order to be a wealth-asset, the resource must satisfy four properties:

1. A capacity to grow in size, number, value over time
2. A capacity to produce a flow of consumption values
3. An absence of an ancillary resource that might pose a limitation to growth
4. A process by which the resource is transmitted inter-generationally among kin by socially established rules (except under capitalism).

Fertility of women and animal stock always satisfy the first and second property, but the other properties are contingent.

Usually, territory cannot grow except with the intervention of central power, such as a king or emperor who can use an army to extend the realm. Analytically and ideologically territory belongs to the king.

If fertility is restrained by infanticide, child spacing, and other birth restraining factors, then it is not a wealth-asset. (No one willingly limits his wealth!) Those restraints reflect lack of satisfaction of item 3.

If 1-3 are satisfied for fertility, then we can be sure that item 4 will be satisfied. Either the benefits of fertility are retained by the group to which a woman belongs (matrilinial), or it will be exchanged for some other form of wealth (most often, in patrilineal organizations).

Territory exists as a wealth asset in conjunction with fertility.
One must ascertain some efforts to defend existing territory or to expand it in the face of opposition for other territorial claimants (at a societal level). please list and cite with quotes: _________________________________________________________________

( ) – if the case. Animal stock clearly uses territory, but territory is usually not claimed as an inherited asset by the groups who possess animal stock.

Reason: Herders want to be able to go where they can find food for the animals. We know that they will often claim special rights over water holes, but not the land around it. (If there is an exception on this, I would be delighted to know ____________________.)

C. Wealth-holding groups.

Corporate groups, such as families, lineages, tribes and states have been the primary controllers of wealth over the course of human evolution. A wealth-holding corporate group transmits wealth through inheritance and is thus an entity that, in principle, has indefinite life. It may include the dead and it always includes the yet-unborn, i.e., it is not a corporal collectivity. They are the socially recognized claimants to an asset by right of inheritance. It also includes people who by socially established rules might receive the asset if other rights holders do not exist. Inheritance is the instrument for defining types of wealth-holding groups.

( ) Matriliny is defined by inheritance through women; and this means that the benefits of women’s fertility belong to the evolving multigenerational group of women and their sons. Leadership by males (sons, brothers) is irrelevant to this characterization. This is obvious in the case where husbands move to the wife’s family’s domicile.

( ) Matriliny is also consistent with patrilocal residence. We must know who has rights to the daughters of the woman after her husband dies. There are no explicit rules of inheritance in most cases of matriliny, since they inherit automatically as a member of the natal group. Where there are, please list: ____________________________________

( ) Patrilineal case: Men inherit animals and perhaps wives. Who are the people who share rights to a given herd? Please list: ____________________________

Who might inherit a wife? Please list: ______________________

( ) Bi-lineal or duo-lineal case: There are discussions about inheritance processes in east Africa and maybe elsewhere (I am suspicious about this). Here we must be certain that both lines of “inheritance” involve wealth assets. Please list: ____________________________

( ) Bilateral inheritance. Case one applies where there are no wealth-assets (such as certain band societies) to inherit.

( ) Bilateral inheritance case two arises in literate societies with written wills. These usually involve wealth, as is common under capitalism (but more generally: e.g., wills were common in Rome1). There are cases of intestate (lacking a will) bilateral inheritance involving property where customary claims to wealth assets are governed by norms of impartibility, with systematic processes of dis-inheritance of sons or daughters through quitclaims. In cases of primogeniture, in contrast, daughters and younger sons do not inherit, although they can represent a drain of the wealth estate for the purchasing

1 http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/63659/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0
dowries or for the training of the younger sons to work outside of the estate.² Identify which children inherit and which do not. Please list: ______________________. This is a rather important matter as inheritance can be a central feature of social structure.

( ) Ambilineal allows a choice to affiliate and inherit “through one parent in each generation”. State what the ethnographer says: ______________________.

( ) Constructed patriliny [a category that I am constructing]: this category would apply to practices such as the standard Arab practice, where the Koran dictates bilateral inheritance while the culture requires patriliny. Here, women belong to the wealth-holding group, but often make no claim on legally designated assets.

II. Resource transfers associated with marriage

A. Bridewealth

( ) Wealth-asset transferred from kin of groom or groom to bride’s father’s group. Not to bride, unless bride is a member of wealth-holding group. Technically, this is the case among Arabs.

It must be a payment, meaning that it is negotiated or culturally prescribed in amount. It need not be paid at once, but it must be an agreed exchange for the bride’s fertility.

If the bride’s offspring will not belong to the husband’s group, then something may be wrong. In general, we would conclude that we were wrong to say that the groom’s side was providing wealth. Double check! (For example, if animals are transferred to bride’s kin, are these animals maintained in a herd? If not, then they are not wealth, but consumer durables.) Explain: ____________________________________

B. Bride price

( ) If the negotiated wealth-asset transfer does not involve wealth, then it is to be called brideprice, not bridewealth. Explain: _________________________________

There might also be transfers to bride, her mother and to others, but these generally will be ( ) gifts. So, how do we distinguish?

Bridewealth and brideprice must be ( ) received by the lineage that is releasing the bride. In a patrilineal system, the bride and her mother are not members of a household, but not of the wealth-holding group and hence it is not part of brideprice, even if it is culturally prescribed in value or type.

² In cases where all sibling or all sons enjoy rights of inheritance, the system can be partially transformed into one of primogeniture by means of quitclaims that are acknowledged by rightful heirs. However, these quitclaims are commonly obtained at the cost of investments by parents into the future prospects of those heirs. These processes are sometimes justified by the economic inadvisability of further divisions of a landed estate (norms of impartibility).
C. Groomwealth-Groomprice

() Groomwealth is a transfer of wealth from the bride’s kin to the groom’s. Without doubt, such a transfer will be negotiated, if it exists. However, with the exception of groomwealth in the form of pre-nuptial agreements in contemporary US, etc, I know of no case of groomwealth. If there is a negotiated transfer to the groom’s kin or to the groom, it is more likely to be consumer durables and should be coded as groomprice. And in every case, the ethnographer will call it “dowry.”

List examples: ________________________________

D. Token bride-price

I am doubtful of this classification. Is this () a negotiated transfer, but remains only () a token? I recall the case in Africa where people had lost their cattle, but used some token to represent cattle in negotiation. Is this the idea? (This would be () token bridewealth.)

I would like to re-examine this category. I would be pleased to see this category disappear. Explain and list examples: ________________________________

E. Dowry

() This is a gift (not negotiated) from the bride’s kin to the new domestic unit. Gifts to the domestic unit are various things of value to the residence, including things for the kitchen. They are not gifts to the bride or groom or other persons. If these exist, they should be noted as such.

F. Dower

() A payment to the bride that may be promised at the time of marriage, with perhaps delayed delivery. It is intended as a means of subsistence in the event of divorce or after death of the husband, or for other purposes. The Moslem mahr falls into this category. So, while it may be in the form of money and hence be ambiguous relative to being wealth, it is not intended to grow in value, as is required for wealth-assets. [This category is absence from the chart of alternatives, below. I have tended to label it as bridewealth in the past. But I now think that this is an error.] Explain and list examples:

______________________________________________________________________

G. Gifts to the bride

() The bride’s trousseau and other things for her are traditional to many cultures. Gift to the bride might include a wealth-asset, either from the kin of the groom or from her own kin. When it contains wealth (such as precious metals) it should be so noted, especially wealth from her kin. List examples: ________________________________

H. Other gifts

() There may be an array of gifts distributed at marriage. These may be of great significance in the culture, but need not have prominence in this recode. Gifts to the mother, the groom, other relatives, etc. are part of a ceremony. Any specific reference to any of these might be justified, but the coder should give a reason for thinking it to be worth mentioning. Explain and list examples: ________________________________
II. Forms of family (related to previous SCCS code 68)

One of the existing codes (68) says that a society is monogamous if polygyny is less than 20%. I don’t understand this. Clearly, polygyny may be unreachable for the common person, even when it is the aspiration of all men. The important factor is the nature of the limitation.

a. ( ) Strict monogamy.

b. ( ) If only certain men, such as chiefs, emperors, etc. are allowed to have multiple wives, then it should be so indicated.

c. ( ) If polygyny is severely limited by resources, then that too should be indicated, such as the exceptionally rich. Explain:

But ultimately, polygyny will be limited by the sex ratio. Unless there is endemic warfare, there will not be enough women. The only relevant question is whether ( ) men have a right to have another wife. Which men and with what restrictions:

Since some other codes reference “stem family,” “extended family” and so forth and < 20% polygyny can be referenced in these cases, this would lead to a confused code. Again, I don’t believe that this 20% calculation has analytical significance. Because such previous codes exist, and such information should not be thrown away at this point, I would welcome the coder’s remarks on this matter.

III. Sources used from SCCS bibliography on this society. SCCS #

Use only the sources rated highest in the Focused Ethnographic Bibliography for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample, Douglas R. White, 1996, World Cultures 2(1):1-126, Number your sources here and use these numbers, e.g., [Sbib#1:24-25] as listed here, chosen as the best sources available. See on-line http://intersci.ss.uci.edu/wiki/index.php/SCCS_ethnographic_bibliography for the complete bibliography.

Sbib#1
Sbib#2
Sbib#3
Sbib#4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Gift</th>
<th>Distributed to rightful claim (Gift)</th>
<th>Payment (including &quot;gifts&quot; that are negotiated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Label</td>
<td>Dowry</td>
<td>Inheritance (Bequest)</td>
<td>Brideweight (Brideprice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>Consumption goods</td>
<td>Wealth (Consumption goods)</td>
<td>Wealth (Product of work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From</td>
<td>Bride’s kin</td>
<td>Groom’s kin or Bride’s kin</td>
<td>Groom’s wealth-holding group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To</td>
<td>New conjugal unit; or to bride (see also Bequest)</td>
<td>Bride or Groom (Bride’s kin)</td>
<td>Bride’s father’s wealth-holding group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In return for</td>
<td>Alliance (if to bride strengthens the bride)</td>
<td>Wealth (N.A.)</td>
<td>Hypergamy or Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search</td>
<td>Groom’s side</td>
<td>Groom’s side</td>
<td>Bride’s side</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bequest: a disposition in a will.
Pre-mortem bequest: a disposition to another while living.
Bequests of the pre- and post- form are commonly received by non-inheriting individuals.
Do not treat inheritance as dowry or use the term dowry if it is inherited. Statements such as “Dowry is officially supposed to represent a daughter's share of her family's wealth, in the form of a pre-mortem inheritance from her parents at the time of her marriage”[^3] should not be taken at fact value but simply treated as dowry if it is a gift (not negotiated) or groomprice if it is negotiated.