

## Unit 2.5 Kinship

### INTRODUCTION

The word “kinship” has been used to mean several things-indeed; the situation is so complex that it is necessary to simplify it in order to study it. “Kinship relationship” has several referents, which must be kept sharply separated analytically. There are biological referents, behavioural referent, and linguistic referents (among others). According to the dictionary kinship has to do with relationships by blood; or consanguinity; affinity with relationships brought by marriage. All cultures distinguish various categories of kins and affines, and these categories, with their associated pattern of rights and obligations, make up what social anthropologists call kinship system. In some societies every individual is, or think he is, related by kinship or affinity to everyone else: in others, including most western ones, a man’s kins and affines are limited for practical purposes to a few close relatives. But in every society some relationships of kinship and affinity are culturally recognized. Biologically not only human beings but all animals have “kinship”. But the vital point is that unlike other animals, human beings consciously and explicitly use the categories of kinship to define social relationships.

### MEANING AND DEFINITION

Kinship refers to a principle by which **individuals or groups of individuals are organized into social groups, roles, categories, and genealogy by means of kinship terminologies**. Kinship is the method of reckoning relationship. In any society, every normal adult individual belongs to the 2 different nuclear families. The family in which he has born and reared is called the “family of orientation”. The other family to which he establishes relation through marriage is called the “family of procreation”. The universal fact of individual membership in two nuclear families gives rise to the kinship system. As the name implies, it is a system of different relationships where individuals are bound together by complex interlocking and ramifying ties.

- According to **Claude Levi Strauss**, “Kinship and its related notions are at the same time prior and exterior to biological relations to which we tend to reduce them”.
- **L.H. Morgan** defines kin terms are, “reflected the forms of marriage and the related makeup of the family (system of consanguinity and affinity of woman family 1871).
- **A.R. Radcliffe: Brown** (1952)- agreed that “Kinship terms are like signposts to interpersonal conducts or etiquette, with the implication of appropriate reciprocal right, duties privileges and obligations.
- **MacLennan**: agreed that kinship terms are merely forms of solution and was not related to actual blood ties at all.

Anthropologist **Robin Fox** states that "the study of kinship is the study of what man does with these basic facts of life – mating, gestation, parenthood, Socialization, siblingship etc. "

- According to **J. Beattie**, "Kinship is not set of genealogical relationships; it is set of social relationships".

### **Consanguinity and Affinity**

**Consanguinity**, kinship characterized by the sharing of common ancestors. The word is derived from the Latin *consanguineous*, "of common blood," which implied that Roman individuals were of the same father and thus shared in the right to his inheritance. Kin are of two basic kinds: consanguineous (sharing common ancestors) and affinal (related by marriage). In some societies other pairs of individuals also treat each other as relatives—for example, the wives of a pair of brothers, relatives by adoption, and godparents who have special kin like relationships (fictive kin). Consanguineous kinship is a universal type; it includes those with common ancestors and excludes individuals who lack ancestors in common.

In the modern sense, consanguinity is a genetic concept. From a strictly biological point of view, the term is inappropriate (as are the terms *mixed blood* and *good blood*), because the genetic contributions of ancestors are not passed on to their descendants as blood but through genes contained in the chromosomes located in cell nuclei. Chromosomes are composed of nucleic acids (DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid) and proteins. DNA is the constituent portion of the chromosome that carries genes, and it is coded in specific ways to produce and control protein synthesis, with parts of each parent's genetic message transmitted to the offspring. From a genetic perspective, consanguinity influences the probabilities of specific combinations of genetic characteristics called genotypes. Consanguinity results in the inheritance, from common ancestors of both parents, of transmissible capacities to synthesize and control nucleic acids and proteins, the essential substances of all organisms.

### **Studying Kinship: From Formal Analysis to Kinship in Action**

Anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century focused on finding out who, in a particular culture, is related to whom and in what way. Typically, the anthropologist would conduct an interview with a few people, asking questions such as "What do you call your brother's daughter?" "Can you (as a man) marry your father's brother's daughter?" and "What is the term you use to refer to your mother's sister?" The anthropologist would ask an individual to name all of his or her relatives, explain how they are related to the interviewee, and provide the terms by which he or she refers to them.

From this information, the anthropologist would construct a *kinship diagram*, a schematic way of presenting the kinship relationships of an individual, called *ego*, using a set of symbols to depict all the kin relations of ego. A kinship diagram depicts ego's relatives, as remembered

by ego. In cultures in which kinship plays a major role in social relations, ego may be able to provide information on dozens of relatives.

In contrast to a kinship diagram, a *genealogy* is a schematic way of presenting a family tree, constructed by beginning with the earliest ancestors that can be traced, then working down to the present. A genealogy, thus, does not begin with ego. When Robin Fox attempted to construct kinship diagrams beginning with ego, the Tory Islanders were uncomfortable with the approach. They preferred to proceed genealogically, so he followed their preference. Tracing a family's complete genealogy may involve archival research in the attempt to construct as complete a history as possible.

Characters	Relationships	Kin Abbreviations
● female	= is married to	Mo mother
▲ male	≈ is cohabiting with	Fa father
◐ deceased female	✶ is divorced from	Br brother
◑ deceased male	≠ is separated from	Z sister
● female "ego" of the diagram	⦿ adopted-in female	H husband
▲ male "ego" of the diagram	⦿ adopted-in male	W wife
	is descended from	Da daughter
	└ is the sibling of	S son
		Co cousin

Symbols Used in Kinship Diagrams.

### Descent (Principles and types)

The term descent denotes the relationship that bonds the child to its mother or father, through which the elements that constitute the main characteristics of their status are transmitted. These include name, surname, heritage, and so on. Descent rules determine mainly membership to the parents' kinship groups; in other words, descent is more of a social convention than a biological relationship. Consanguinity may exist, but it is in no way a necessary requirement. For instance, we consider adopted individuals (fictitious or ritual kinship) to have the same descent as the members of the group that adopted them. Just as it applies to individuals, descent can pertain to groups when group members biologically descend from a common ancestor or when they declare this to be the case, as slaves did by assuming membership of their owner's kinship group. Morgan and especially Pitt-Rivers and Radcliffe-Brown formulated a series of theories that reproduction by way of descent is the main principle of kinship. These theories are known as descent theories. A different view to these older theories is aired by Lévi-Strauss's alliance theory, which links the exchange of women and the interdiction of incest as the organizational principles of kinship.

**Descent** is the tracing of kinship relationships through parentage. It is based on the fact that everybody is born from someone else. Descent creates a line of people from whom someone is descended, stretching through history. But not all cultures reckon descent in the same way.

Some cultures have a **bilineal descent** system, in which a child is recognized as being related by descent to both parents. Others have a **unilineal descent** system, which recognizes descent through only one parent, either the father or the mother. The distribution of bilineal and unilineal systems is roughly correlated with different modes of livelihood. This correspondence makes sense because economic systems—production, consumption, and exchange—are closely tied to the way people are socially organized.

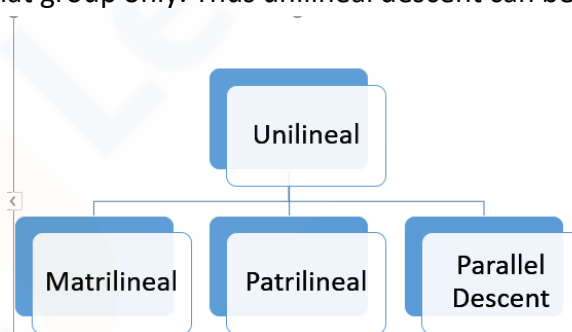
The practical importance of descent comes from its use as a means for one person to assert rights, duties, privileges, or status in relation to another person, who may be related to the first either because one is ancestor to the other or because the two acknowledge a common ancestor. Descent has special influence when rights to succession, inheritance, or residence follow kinship lines.

### Principle and Types of descent:

- a) Unilineal Descent
  - b) Non-unilineal
    - i) Bilineal/Double
    - ii) Bilateral
  - c) Ambilineal

### Unilineal descent:

**Unilineal descent** establishes descent group membership by a direct line from a common ancestor exclusively through one's male or female ancestors, but not both. In this way, each individual is automatically assigned from the moment of birth to his or her mother's or father's group and to that group only. Thus unilineal descent can be matrilineal or patrilineal.



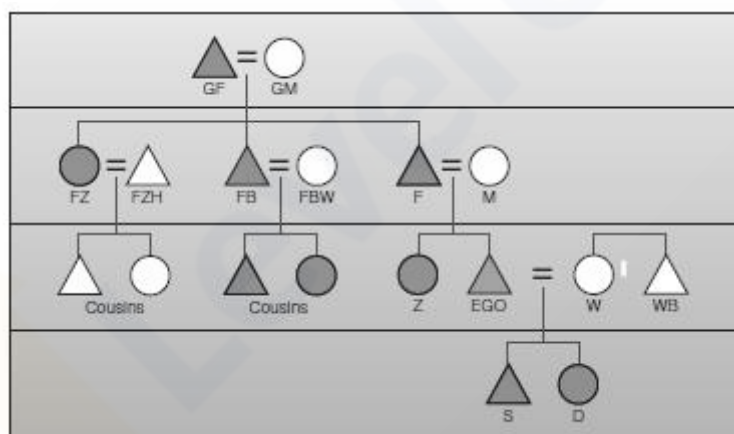
In non-Western societies, unilineal descent groups are quite common. Depending on the culture, the individual is assigned at birth to membership in a specific descent group, which may be traced either through the female line, that is by **matrilineal descent**, or through the male line, by **patrilineal descent**. In matrilineal societies females are culturally recognized as socially significant, for they are considered responsible for the group's continued existence. In patrilineal societies, this responsibility falls on the male members of the group, thereby enhancing their social importance.

Unilineal descent has several descent groups. The two major forms of a unilineal descent group (be

it patrilineal or matrilineal) are the lineage and the clan. A **lineage** is a unilineal kinship group descended from a common ancestor or founder who lived four to six generations ago and in which relationships among members can be exactly stated in genealogical terms. A **clan** is an extended unilineal kinship group, often consisting of several lineages, whose members claim common descent from a remote ancestor, usually legendary or mythological.

### PATRILINEAL DESCENT AND ORGANIZATION

Patrilineal descent (sometimes called *agnatic* or *male descent*) is the more widespread of the two unilineal descent systems. Through forefathers, the male members of a patrilineal descent group trace their descent from a common ancestor. Brothers and sisters belong to the descent group of their father's father, their father, their father's siblings, and their father's brother's children. A man's son and daughter also trace their descent back through the male line to their common ancestor. In the typical patrilineal group, authority over the children rests with the father or his elder brother. A woman belongs to the same descent group as her father and his brothers, but her children cannot trace their descent through them.

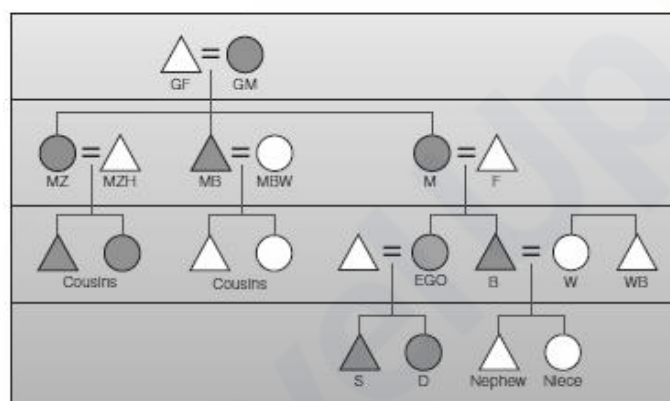


Patrilineal kinship organization is traditionally embedded in many cultures throughout the world and often endures despite radical political and economic changes. Such is also the case among the Han, the dominant ethnic majority in modern China. Until the communist takeover in 1949, most of rural Chinese society was strongly patrilineal, with a few exceptions such as the Mosuo of Yunnan Province in the southernmost part of the country. Since then, considerable changes have occurred, although vestiges of the old system persist in different regions. Traditionally, the basic unit for economic cooperation among the Han Chinese was the large extended family, typically including aged parents and their sons, their sons' wives, and their sons' children.

A patrilineal society is very much a man's world. No matter how valued women may be, they inevitably find themselves in a difficult position. Amongst **Yoruba of west Nigeria** the social order depends on the integration of political, economic and religious activities through systems of patrilineage called as **Idilies**. The oldest male member is acknowledged as the head of idilies. He exercises religious and political authority over his lineage mates. **(LOOK FOR INDIAN EXAMPLES FROM LP VIDYARTHI)**

### MATRILINEAL DESCENT AND ORGANIZATION:

Matrilineal descent is traced exclusively through the female line, just as patrilineal descent is through the male line. However, the matrilineal pattern differs from the patrilineal in that it does not automatically confer gender authority. For Example among matrilineal Mosuo China, property passes through the female line, women are often heads of their households, and they are usually the ones making the business decisions—yet, political power tends to be in the hands of males.



Indeed, while women in matrilineal societies may have considerable power, they do not hold exclusive authority in the descent group. They share it with men. Usually, these are the brothers, rather than the husbands, of the women through whom descent is traced. Apparently, a function of matrilineal systems is to provide continuous female solidarity within the female work group. Matrilineal systems are usually found in horticultural societies in which women perform much of the work in the house and nearby gardens. Matrilineal descent in part prevails because women's labour as crop cultivators is regarded as so important to the society.

In a matrilineal system, brothers and sisters belong to the descent group of the mother, the mother's mother, the mother's siblings, and the mother's sisters' children. Thus, every male belongs to the same descent group as his mother, and a man's own children belong to his wife's descent group, not his.

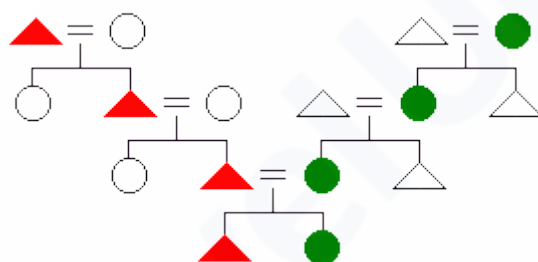
Although not true of all matrilineal systems, a common feature is the relative weakness of the social tie between wife and husband. A woman's husband lacks authority in the household they share. Her brother, and not the husband-father, distributes goods, organizes work,



settles disputes, supervises rituals, and administers inheritance and succession rules. Meanwhile, her husband fulfills the same role in his own sister's household. Furthermore, his property and status are inherited by his sister's son rather than his son. Thus, brothers and sisters maintain lifelong ties with one another, whereas marital ties are easily severed. In matrilineal societies, unsatisfactory marriages are more easily ended than in patrilineal societies. For Example, Nayars have a matrilineal group called Taravad. In this society there is no significant marital alliance and residence is matrilineal. In this society authority vests in the hands of the elder brother, a system called avunco-potestality.

### PARALLEL DESCENT:

Parallel descent is a possible form that is extremely rare. In such a type of descent rule the males reckon them through the male line and females reckon their descent through the female line. In 1975, Jane Safer, has reported this type of a descent rule among the Saha who live in Santa Marta Mountains near Caribbean Coast of Columbia, close to the Venezuelan border. This being the only society that has been reported to have such a type of descent principle, this type of a rule is not talked about in anthropology.

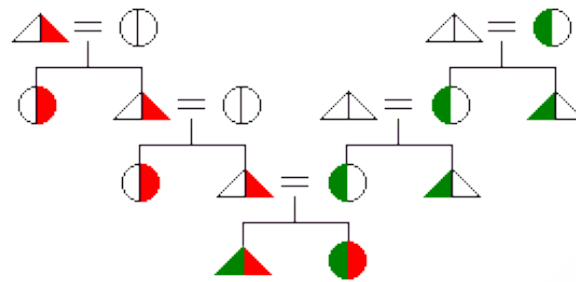


### Non-Unilineal/Cognatic Descent

Cognatic means "a kin to both the parents." The number of societies with such rule of descent is relatively less. They do not have clear cut membership as that of a unilineal kin group. They are of 2 types.

**i) Bilineal/Double Descent:** Double descent or double unilineal descent or bilineal descent, where descent is reckoned both patrilineally and matrilineally, is very rare. In this system descent is matrilineal for some purpose and patrilineal for others. Generally, where double descent is reckoned each lineage takes corporate action in different spheres of society.

For example, among the Yako of Eastern Nigeria property is divided a between patrilineal line possessions and matrilineal line possessions. Patrilineage own immovable property such as lands, whereas the matrilineage owns consumable and ritualistic properties such as livestock. The legally weaker matrilineal line is somewhat more important in religious matters than the patrilineal line. Because of existence of double descent rule, a Yako individual might inherit grazing lands from the father's patrilineal group and certain ritual privileges from mother's line. Todas also follow double descent.



## ii) Bilateral Descent

Many societies do not have lineal descent groups. These are societies with bilateral kinship. Bilateral means “two-sided” and in this case it refers to the fact that one’s relatives on both the mother’s and father’s sides are equal in importance or, more usually, in unimportance. Kinship reckoning in bilateral societies does not refer to common descent but rather is horizontal, moving outward from close to more distant relatives rather than upward to common ancestors.

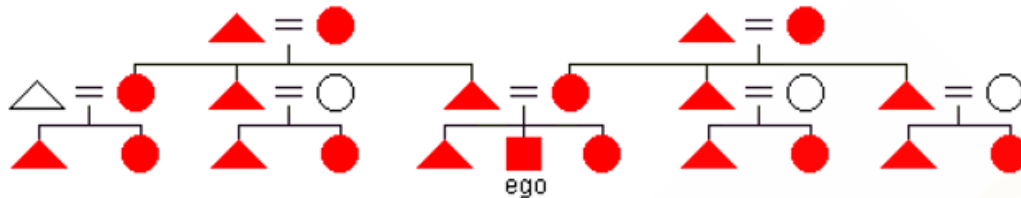
The term kindred describes a person’s bilateral set of relatives who may be called upon for some purpose. Kindred is laterally rather than lineally organized. Most bilateral societies have kindred that overlap in membership. In North America, Kindred is thought to be people who might be invited to weddings, funerals, or some other ceremonial occasion. Kindred, however, is not usually a definite group.

Societies with bilateral kinship differ in precisely how distant relatives have to be before they are lost track of or before they are not included in ceremonial activities. In societies in which kinship is relatively unimportant, fewer relatives are included in the kindred. In other bilateral societies, however, where kinship connections are somewhat more important, more would be included. The distinctive feature of bilateral kinship is that, aside from brothers and sisters, no two persons belongs to exactly same kin group.

Your kindred contain relatives spreading out on both mother’s and father’s sides, but the member of your kindred is affiliated only by way of their connection to you (ego, or the person in focus). Thus, the kindred is an ego-centred group of kin. Because different people (except for brothers and sisters) have different mother and father, your first cousins will have different kindred from yours. It is the ego-centred nature of the group that makes it to serve as a permanent or persistent group. The only thing the people in kindred have in common is the ego who brings them together. A kindred has no name, no common purpose. Furthermore, because everyone belongs to many different and overlapping kindreds, the society is not divided into clear-cut groups.



In bilateral society, the kindred may provide social insurance against adversity. Among the Chipewyan of Subarctic Canada, people would borrow a fishing net from a kindred member, or ask a kindred member to provide childcare for a young person whose parent was ill.



Bilateral descent is most prevalent in modes of production where there is either an advantage to focusing on the nuclear family as a productive unit, and/or where there is an advantage in having many collateral relatives. It is common in the industrial mode of production, such as the United States, where the focus is on the nuclear family. Collateral relatives are identified but forgotten in many families past the first cousin level.

Bilateral descent is also common in the foraging mode of production, like the San. Bilateral descent gives a people many relatives if they should choose to keep track of them. And in foraging cultures, people do most could tell you all their collateral relatives for three or four generations above their own, and two or three below. This is because relatives, no matter how distant, are an economic support system. In times of need, San can seek out their relatives, who will take them in and share everything with them.

Consistent with the social patterns of nomadic foraging societies, the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari have developed a bilateral kinship system that allows for optimal flexibility in population distribution. Small nuclear and extended family units combine and recombine into flexible camps whose composition changes on a seasonal and annual basis according to the vagaries of resource distribution.

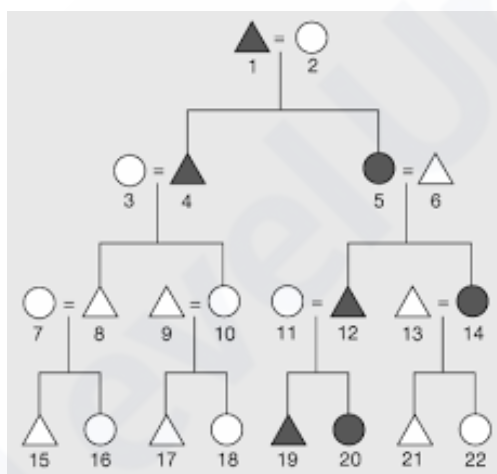
The basic Ju/'hoansi social unit is the "**camp**", a group of related people who live together during a single season (**Lee 2002: 60-64**). The camp often remains intact through at least several movements in the nomadic cycle. Its members cluster together in adjacent huts that are arranged around a central plaza, an open area where people organize and perform the most of their daily activities. Membership varies from just a few people to over 30, with an average of approximately 20. Members of the camp have open access to a stretch of land that the group exploits and over which it assumes nominal ownership rights. They hunt and gather the wild resources that this territory provides and are bound to share what they have obtained with everyone in the local group. They also provide regular mutual support and aid generally expected among kin and close friends. Neighbouring camps are usually interconnected by kinship and marriage. They frequently use each other's resources but only if permission is requested. They will also exchange visits, which may last for a week or two.

During the dry season, several related groups will often form a join encampment that can contain over 100 people.

Membership in the camp is determined according to bilateral kinship ties that build upon individual egocentric links and networks.

### AMBILINEAL DESCENT

The descent rules examined so far admit certain people as members while excluding others. A unilineal rule uses one line only, either the female or the male. Besides the unilineal rules, there is another descent rule called **ambilineal** descent. As in any descent group, membership comes through descent from a common ancestor. However, ambilineal groups differ from unilineal groups in that they do not *automatically* exclude either the children of sons or those of daughters. People can choose the descent group they join (for example, that of their father's father, father's mother, mother's father, or mother's mother). People also can change their descent-group membership or belong to two or more groups at the same time.

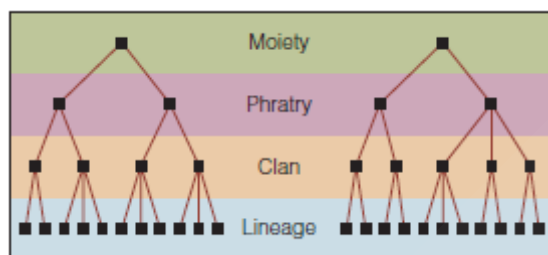


Unilineal descent is a matter of ascribed status; ambilineal descent illustrates achieved status. With unilineal descent, membership is automatic; no choice is permitted. People are born members of their father's group in a patrilineal society or of their mother's group in a matrilineal society. They are members of that group for life. Ambilineal descent permits more flexibility in descent-group affiliation.

Among Samoan Islanders (and numerous other cultures in the Pacific as well as in Southeast Asia) a person has the option of affiliating with either the mother's or the father's descent group. Known as ambilineal descent, such a kin-ordered system provides a measure of flexibility. However, this flexibility also introduces a possibility of dispute and conflict as unilineal groups compete for members. Samoan Islanders follow ambilineal descent because

of depopulation which occurred due to contact with Europeans (due to European diseases).

### Forms of descent groups



### **Moiety**

When a whole society is divided into two kin groups based on unilineal descent, each group is called moiety (after the French word for 'half'). The members in each moiety believe them to be descended from a common ancestor even though they can not specify how. But societies with moiety systems have relatively small population in comparison to societies with phratries and clans. W.H.R. Rivers had reported about a moiety system existing among the Todas of Nilgiri Hills in Kerala, India. They have a dual organization of two groups - Teivali and Tarthar. Each of the two halves is again divided into a number of clans. The two moieties are endogamous.

Among some tribes in Manipur, a north eastern state of India, there are moiety systems of social organization. The **Monsangs** who inhabit at six villages in Chandel district of this state belong to this type kin group combination. According to their oral tradition, two groups of this people emerged out of a cave to this world. These two groups form the moiety of this people. The moiety known as '**Rinhent**' has six clans viz.,

rohenti, wanglar, tesongti, hongamti, shongshi and khatur. Rinhe is the forefather of these clans. The other moiety is known as '**Simputi**' and it has four clans - ngarati, thumhliti, kiiriti and chiiriti. Thumpungpa was the progenitor of this moiety group. Ideally the moieties are exogamous.

According to People of India Project- Moiety is found in about 64 communities, most of which are tribes Arunachal reports the highest incident of moiety followed by Nagaland.

### **Phratry**

A Phratry can be defined as a unilineal descent group composed of two or more clans. The members of a clan may feel that they have particular close ties with other clan of the phratry. Phratry are found in very few societies of the world. Muria Gonds of M.P., Rabhas of Assam, the Ao Nagas of Nagaland, and Raj Gonds of Andhra. Muria Gonds are described into 5 phratries- the Nag Vans (Snake), Kachimvans (Tortoise), Bakra Vans (Goat race), Bagh vans(Tiger), Bodmink (Fish race). They are not allowed to eat their totem and mourn if one dies.

Based on principle of descent, phratries can also be classified into 2 types: Matriphratries and Patriphratries.

The phratries in a society can be named or may not be named. They may or may not be exogamous. Like for example among the Hopis, the phratries are exogamous and the Crow Red Indians, they are endogamous. The phratries characterized by common religious obligations and observe common religious rites. A phratry may be associated with totemism like Muria Gonds.

The clans in a phratry retain their separate identity but each clan has some kind of special affinity with phratry. The term “phratry” is derived from a Greek word “phrater” which means a brother. Thus, a phratry is a kin group of brotherhood in which there are several clans combined together.

According to People of India project Phratry is found among about 151 communities belonging mostly to ST in Central India.

Since feelings of kinship are often weaker between people from different clans, the moiety system is a cultural invention that keeps clan-based communities together. Like lineages and clans, phratries and moieties are often exogamous, and so these different kin-groups are bound together by marriages between their members. And like clans, they provide members rights of access to other communities, as among the Hopi. In a community that does not include one's clan members, one's phratry members are still there to turn to for hospitality. Finally, moieties may perform reciprocal services for one another. Among them, individuals turn to members of the opposite “half” in their community for the necessary mourning rituals when a member of their own moiety dies. Such interdependence between moieties, again, serves to maintain the cohesion of the entire society.

The principle of institutionalized reciprocity between groups of matrilineal clans organized into two equal halves, or moieties, is beautifully illustrated in the circular settlement pattern of many traditional Indian villages in the tropical forest of South America's Amazon region. Dwellings located in one-half of the village are those of clans belonging to one exogamous moiety, and those on the opposite side are the dwellings of clans belonging to the other. Since their clans are often matrilineal, the institutionalized rules of reciprocity in this kin-ordered community traditionally require that a woman marry a man from a clan house on the opposite side of the village, who then moves into her ancestral clan house. Their son, however, will one day have to find a wife from his father's original moiety and will have to move to his father's mother's side of the village. That is to say, the moiety system of institutionalized reciprocity functions like a social “zipper” between clans engaged in a repetitive cycle of exchange relations.

## Clans

In the course of time, as generation succeeds generation and new members are born into the lineage, the kinship group's membership may become too large to manage or may outgrow the lineage's resources. When this happens, **fission** occurs; that is, the original lineage splits into new, smaller lineages. Usually, the members of the new lineages continue to recognize their original relationship to one another. The result of this process is the appearance of a larger kind of descent group: the clan.

A clan—typically consisting of several lineages—is an extended unilineal descent group whose members claim common descent from a distant ancestor (usually legendary or mythological) but are unable to trace the precise genealogical links back to that ancestor. This stems from the great genealogical depth of the clan, whose founding ancestor lived so far in the past that the links must be assumed rather than known in detail.

A clan differs from a lineage in another respect: It lacks the residential unity that is generally, although not always, characteristic of a lineage's core members. As with the lineage, descent may be patrilineal, matrilineal, or ambilineal. Because clan membership is dispersed rather than localized, it usually does not involve a shared holding of tangible property. Instead, it involves shared participation in ceremonial and political matters. Only on special occasions will the membership gather together for specific purposes.

Clans, however, may handle important integrative functions. Like lineages, they may regulate marriage through exogamy. Because of their dispersed membership, clans give individuals the right of entry into associated local groups no matter where they are. Members usually are expected to give protection and hospitality to others in the clan. Hence, these can be expected in any local group that includes people who belong to a single clan. Clans, lacking the residential unity of lineages, frequently depend on symbols—of animals, plants, natural forces, colors, and special objects—to provide members with solidarity and a ready means of identification. These symbols, called totems, often are associated with the clan's mythical origin, and reinforce clan members' awareness of their common descent.

Example- **The Winnebago Red Indians** have clan-based organization. They have 12 clans in total. The chief is from Thunderbird clan, the army is from warrior clan, the beat clan performs the role of police and so on.

**Todas** are divided into two moieties Tarthar (having 12 clans) and Teivali (having 6 clans).

The Gonds of central India have a goat clan because their ancestors once stole a goat for sacrifice; but they were saved from the punishment of stealing as the goat turned into a pig and thereafter, they regarded goat as their.

totem. The Korkus of central India have tree totems, as their ancestors hide under various trees to save themselves from their enemies. The Balahis of central India have snake and owl totems; these animals saved and protected their ancestors when by accident they had been left behind in the field as helpless babies.

When a clan becomes very large in size, it may be segmented, and each segment may acquire a part of the totemic species as the new totem. For instance, a tiger clan may split into sections which regard the head, tail, claws, teeth, etc., of the tiger as their totems. This gives rise to the concept of a phratry, group of brother clans. The clans are sometimes named after some nicknames and such clans are found mostly among the Australian tribes. The Crow-Indians of America are also divided into thirteen exogamous matrilineal clans. These units are designated after nicknames.

### Lineages

A lineage is a set of kin whose members trace their descent from a common ancestor through known links. There may be patrilineages or matrilineages, depending on whether the links are traced through males only or females only. Lineages are often designated by the name of the common male or female ancestor. In some societies, people belong to a hierarchy of lineages. That is, they first trace their descent back to the ancestor of a minor lineage, then to the ancestor of a larger and more inclusive major lineage and so on.

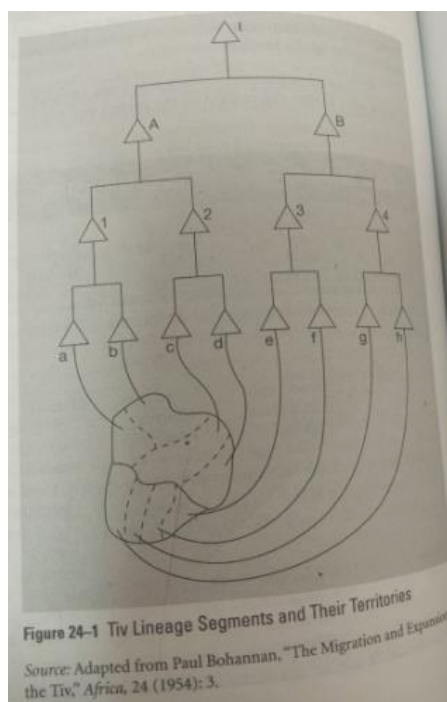
A lineage is always strict exogamous unit. It helps in smooth maintenance of the purity and pollution relating to birth and death. All members of a lineage have psychology unity. Lineage provides social security to its members. It co-operates all the members of a lineage in the economic field for example in agriculture. During the time of crises, the lineage members united and cooperate each other.

Patrilineage are found among Witoto Red Indians of Amazonia, Nuer of Africa. Matrilineage is found among Khasi and Garo of Meghalaya.

### Segmentary Lineage

In some cases, especially where there is substantial depth, larger units are subdivided into smaller components through a process of branching or **segmentation**. This arrangement involves the successive formation of smaller groups from parent lineages. Thus there is a single maximal lineage at the highest level of the system, which is divided into two or more branches or segments, which are in turn divided and redivided in a regularly recurring process. The number of branches at each point of division is dependent upon the number of sons or daughters attributed to the previous ancestor. The number of levels is theoretically unlimited. Biblical accounts of ancient Hebrew segmentation follow genealogies of up to 20 generations.





This organization is based on the general principle that genealogically closer groups unite in opposition to more distant groups and on the contingent nature of these groups by which they are activated only in situations of opposition to groups of structural equivalence and equal size. For example, if two men who are members of minor lineages in the same tribal section fight, only the members of each minor lineage are involved, but if members of two different tribal sections fight, all members of each section, regardless of minor lineage membership, are involved and, if mobilized, are acting as section members.

Segmentary lineage systems are important because in many tribal societies lineage groups based on descent through the male line are vested with important economic and political responsibilities. In segmentary lineage systems, patrilineages commonly have collective ownership of, or particular claims on, important resources such as land and water sources. In general, lineages are responsible for security, providing the defence force and undertaking collective responsibility for gaining restitution or taking vengeance for losses and injuries. The original and most famous description of these systems, The Nuer, described a pastoral tribal people living in the southern Sudan. Evans-Pritchard recounted the correspondence between the lineage system and the territorial system that made possible their functioning as a decentralized, egalitarian, and expansionist political system. These systems are widespread in Africa (Somali, Libyan Bedouin) and in the Middle East (Turkmen, Arabian Bedouin, Baluch).

Segmentary lineage systems are best understood as means of defense and social control. The balanced opposition serves as a deterrent to aggressive adventurism. Collective responsibility of group members for each other guarantees that no individual or small group is a free target. Loyalty to one's lineage is not so much a sentimental attachment to blood kin as it is a hard-headed recognition of who one can count on when one gets into trouble.

The Tiv of Nigeria offers a classic example of segmentary lineage system, one that happens to link all the Tiv into a single genealogical structure or tribe. The Tiv are a large society, numbering more than 800,000. The Figure is a representation of the Tiv lineage structure as described by **Paul Bohannan**. In the Figure, there are 4 level of lineages. Each of the smallest lineages, symbolized by **a** to **h**. So minimal lineages **a** and **b** are together in lineage **1**. Lineages **1** and **2** are embedded in lineage **A**. Territorial organization follows lineage hierarchy. As shown the most closely related lineages have territories near each other. Minimal lineages **a** and **b** live next to each other; their combined territory is the territory of their higher order lineages **1**. Lineage **A** in turn has territory that is differentiated from lineage **B**. All of Tivland is to be descend from one ancestor, represented by I.

Tiv lineage organization is the foundation of Tiv political organization. A dispute between lineages (and territories) **a** and **b** remains minor, since no more than “brother” segments are involved. But dispute between **a** and **c** involves lineages **1** and **2** as well, with the requirement that **b** assist **a** and **d** supports **c**. This process of mutual support, called **complementary opposition**, means that segments will unite only in a confrontation with some other group. Groups that will fight with each other in a minor dispute might coalesce at some later time against a larger group.

The segmentary lineage system was presumably very effective in allowing the Tiv to intrude into new territory and take land from other tribal societies with smaller descent groups. Individual Tiv lineage segments could call on support from related lineages when faced with border troubles. Conflicts within the society-that is, between segments-especially in border areas, were often turned outward, “releasing internal pressure in an explosive blast against other peoples”.

A segmentary lineage system may generate a formidable military force, but the combinations of manpower it produces are temporary, forming and dissolving as the occasion demands. Tribal political organization does not make for a political system more or less permanently integrates a number of communities.

### **Function of Unilineal Descent Groups:**

#### **i) Regulating Marriages (explain clan and lineage exogamy and incest taboo)**

**ii) Economic Functions** Members of a person’s lineage or clan are often required to side with that person in any quarrel or lawsuit, to help him or her get established economically, to contribute to a bride price or fine, and to support the person in life crisis. Mutual aid often extends to economic cooperation on a regular basis. The unilineal group may act as a corporate unit in land ownership.

Descent groups members may also support one another in such enterprises as clearing bush or forest for farmlands and providing food and other items for feasts, potlaches, curing rites, and ceremonial occasions, such as births, marriages and funerals.

iii) **Political Functions** (Discuss Lineage based organisation, Clan based political organization and segmentary lineage of Tiv Nigeria)

iv) **Religious Functions** A clan or lineage may have its own religious beliefs and practices, worshipping its own gods or goddesses and ancestral spirits. (**Discuss Ancestor worship, Clan and totem**)

### **Descent, Filiation and Complementary Filiation**

**Filiation** can be defined as the **relationship between child and his parents** which is considered equally important from the mother's or the father's side, irrespective of the fact whether the lineage traced is patrilineal or matrilineal.

The Sociologist Meyer Fortes explains this fact, as the **relationship created by the fact of being the legitimate child of one's parents**. He says that since a great majority of societies have Jural recognition to the parenthood of both parents, filiation is normally bilateral or equilateral. Thus, Filiation is essentially the bond between successive generations- a bond of compounded rights and identifications epitomized in the rules of inheritance and succession on one hand, and of differences and gaps symbolized in the incest taboo, and in customs of respect and avoidance. Persons are siblings in the domestic union by virtue of common filiation and with polygynous marriage, they are usually graded whether their common filiation is unilateral or bilateral.

An important point here is that the individuals in unilineal descent groups also have important relations with relatives other than those in his descent group and in relation particularly with the parent other than those from whom he has gained his descent group membership. This is called the "COMPLEMENTARY FILIATION", points Meyer Fortes. In PATRIFILIATION, the son succeeds to the components of his father's status and filiation thus carries on to the next generation, carrying the bond between the father and the child. In MATRIFILIATION though, the son does not succeed to the components of his father's status and rights but has a status as mother's brother to his sister's children.

**Complementary filiation** was a term introduced by the group of anthropologists of Africa who are often referred to as 'descent theorists', foremost of whom was M. Fortes. The phrase referred to the fact that in societies with unilineal descent groups people nonetheless recognize kinship links with relatives who do not belong to their own descent group. Thus, in societies with patrilineal descent groups, individuals have important socially defined links with members of their mother's family, such as, for example, their mother's brother or their maternal grandparents, while in matrilineal societies individuals have similar ties to their father's family.

**Originally the concept was** used to describe an important ethnographic characteristic of many African societies, such as the Tallensi of Ghana studied by Fortes, and the anthropologists' theory was little more than a paraphrase of the theory of the people they had studied. Thus, Fortes described how Tallensi individuals saw their complementary filiation

links as different from their lineage links, yet essential to their well-being (Fortes 1949). While lineage links always have a political and hierarchical character, complementary filiation is more emotional and more personal. This is because all members of a descent group have different ties of complementary filiation from one another, but are undifferentiated on the basis of descent, so that complementary filiation gives an idiom to feelings of individuality and independence. This sociological perspective is, argued Fortes (1961), also reflected in the religious domain. J. Goody (1962), following in the same tradition, stressed the importance of inheritance and showed how, while one inherited a certain type of property and status inside the descent group, one also inherited different types of property and status along the lines of complementary filiation.

In Fortes's later work the notion of complementary filiation was used to support a much more general claim (Fortes 1953; 1969). Fortes and a number of other anthropologists argued that the existence of groups was, at bottom, always similar and always involved the recognition of the complementary role of the two parents. Thus, in patrilineal societies, while for political, jural and military purposes lineages ignored links through mothers, there nonetheless existed a domestic level where links through women were recognized in the form of complementary filiation.

**It is this wider theoretical** implication of the theory which came under attack from such writers as Edmund Leach (1961), who argued that in those patrilineal societies which Levi-Strauss would qualify as having an elementary structure, links through the mother were to be seen, not as manifesting a kind of muted kinship but rather as being part of affinal links. Thus in such societies one's mother was not seen as a 'mother' in the European sense, nor her brother as a man linked to her, but both would be seen as members of the group who give sexual partners to your own group. Such a distinction might seem of little importance but in fact hides a fundamental theoretical claim, namely that there is nothing universal or 'biological' to human kinship which constrains its representation.

### **Kinship terminology**

Kin terms are the labels used to refer and address various kins and affines. Morgan was the first one to observe that kinship terminology could serve as a basis of classification. In different systems, the kin terms differ drastically. In some systems all the men of parental generation of both father's and mother's side are brought under the same kin term. While in other systems there are different terms for father's brothers and mother's brothers. The kinship terms for descent differ significantly from those of kinship terms used for affines.

**L. H. Morgan** (1871) on the basis of his observation in North American Indian societies established two systems of terminology such as follows:

**Classificatory system:** According to this system, single term is used for calling more than one type of kin. Normally the similarity in age, group, sex and same generation is the basis for this

categorization. In some societies, those kins who have same status and position are called out by same kin term. Classificatory kinship terminology places lineal and collateral kins into the same category.

**Descriptive system:** In this system, every kin is designated by a different kin term. Separate terms are used to refer different kins. It distinguishes between lineal and collateral kins. For example: In English societies the term Brother and sister are descriptive as they are used to refer to the son and daughter of one's parents only. But in North India the term Bhai and Behan is used to refer to the son and daughter of one's parents and also for cross and parallel cousins.

**L. H. Morgan as an evolutionist viewed this system of classification in evolutionary perspective.** He considered classificatory system to be the characteristic of simple societies which are less differentiated while descriptive terminology to be a feature of more advanced and modern societies. But this idea is not very absolute as even in modern Western societies the classificatory terms like Uncle, Aunt, brother-in-law and sister-in-law are also used.

**W.H.R. Rivers talked about the significance of kinship terms.** He accounted that kinship terms came into existence with some marriage practices. Today even if those cultural practices have vanished, the kinship terms associated with them still exist. So, by studying kinship terms, we can trace those marriage customs and practices. This can be proved as a significant finding in case of simple societies which generally lack written records of the past.

**Kroeber** related kinship terms with the language spoken by any society. According to him kinship terms are just a method to distinguish various kins.

**Radcliffe Brown** also emphasized on kinship and kinship terminology after he edited a collection of African Kinship studies. According to him, kinship terminology can be used as a key to unlock any social structure. In simple societies kinship is the basis of social organization and is associated with a particular kinship terms. Thus, by studying the kinship system and terminology of a society its social structure can be understood. He also emphasized upon the study of kinship functionally.

According to Radcliff-Brown the function of kinship terminology is its use "as a means of ordering relationships for social purposes" (Radcliffe Brown, 1950). For ego, the categories provided for him by his kinship system serve not only to direct his conduct and specify his rights and duties in the normative sense but also to establish a particular arrangement of persons in his field of kinship in which these are actualised.

**Murdock** in his detailed analysis of kinship presents an elaborate scheme for understanding kinship terminology. According to him kinship terms are technically classified in 3 different ways:



- **By the mode of use**

Basing on the mode of use the kinship terms can be divided into two sections. Some terms are for direct addressing and others are for indirect reference. A **“term of address”** is used to call a relative, where as **“term of reference”** is used to designate a relative for speaking about him/her to a third person.

- **By the linguistic structure**

When classified according to linguistic structure, kinship terms are distinguished as **elementary and derivative**. An elementary term is an irreducible word like in English “Father” “Nephew” which cannot be analysed into components having kinship meanings. Therefore, called “elementary term” A derivative term is one which combines two or more elementary terms to denote a specific relative. A derivative term is like grandfather, father-in-law, step daughter, etc.

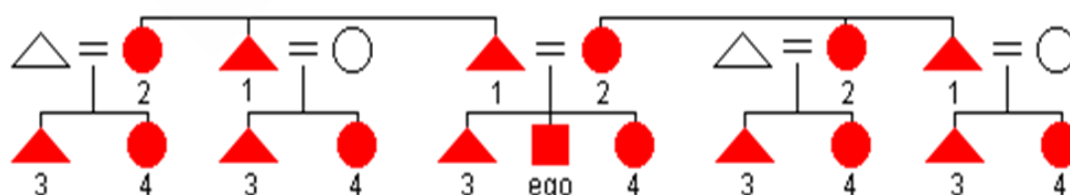
- **By the range of application**

Here the kinship term is differentiated into two groups-**denotative term and classificatory term**. **Denotative terms applied to the relatives of a single kinship category**, defined by the generation, sex and genealogical connection. For example, the English terms, brother, sister, daughter, son-in-law, etc., denote several persons with the same designation. In contrast, **classificatory term is the term that applies to the persons of two or more kinship categories**. For instance, in English the term grandmother stands for both mother’s mother and father’s mother, uncle may be brother of any one of the parents or may be husband of father’s sister or mother’s sister.

G.P. Murdock had identified six major systems of terminology on global basis. They are as follows:

- The Eskimo system
- The Hawaiian system
- The Iroquois system
- The Omaha system
- The Crow system
- Sundanese system

a) **Hawaiian terminology:**





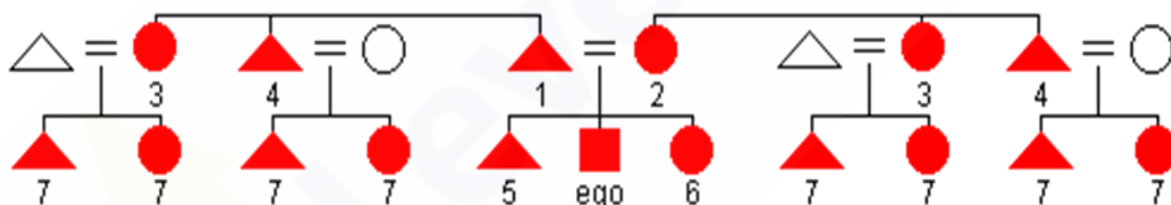
This distinguishes only between sex and generation. In this system of terminology siblings and cousins are classified alike by one or two terms distinguished by sex. There is no distinction between direct and collateral relations. The members on both the father's and mother's side are considered more or less equally. It doesn't distinguish between cross and parallel relatives. This terminology is classificatory in nature.

**Example:** It can be observed in Hawaiian Polynesians. In North India, siblings are denoted as Bhai=brother, Didi=sister.

Another example of Hawaiian terminology can be seen in Zeme tribe in Assam and Manipur where the word Asi is used for sister, brother, all cross and parallel cousins, sister-in-law and brother-in-law as well. There is no distinction between genders.

**The Hawaiian system reflects the absence of strong unilineal descent**, and members on both the father's and the mother's sides are viewed as more or less equal. The siblings of EGO's father and mother are all recognized as being similar relations and are merged under a single term appropriate for their gender. In like manner, the children belonging to the siblings of EGO's parents are related to EGO in the same way the brother and sister are. **Falling under the incest taboo, they are ruled out as potential marriage partners.**

#### b) Eskimos terminology:



It has both classificatory and descriptive terms, it provides different terms for nuclear family members. It also distinguishes between lineal and collateral relatives. The lineal relatives have descriptive terms while the collateral kins have classificatory terms. It also differentiates between siblings and cousins, but all types of cousins are put together in one category.

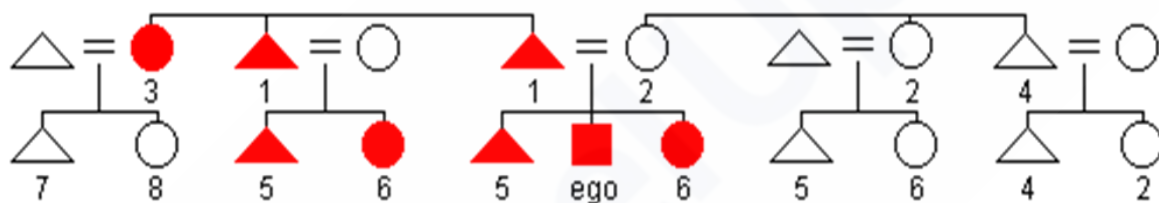
The Eskimo system, comparatively rare among all the world's systems, is the one used by Euramericans, as well as by a number of food-foraging peoples (including the Inuit and other Eskimos; hence the name). Sometimes referred to as the *lineal system*, the **Eskimo system** emphasizes the nuclear family by specifically identifying mother, father, brother, and sister while lumping together all other relatives into a few large categories. For example, the father is distinguished from the father's brother (uncle), but the father's brother is not distinguished from the mother's brother (both are called "uncle"). The mother's sister and father's sister are treated similarly, both called "aunt." In addition, all the sons and daughters of aunts and

uncles are called “cousin,” thereby making a generational distinction but without indicating the side of the family to which they belong or even their gender.

Unlike other terminologies, the Eskimo system provides separate and distinct terms for the nuclear family members. This is probably because the Eskimo system is generally found in bilateral societies where the dominant kin-group is the kindred, in which only immediate family members are important in day-to-day affairs. This is especially true of modern North American societies, where many families are independent, living apart from, and not directly involved with, other relatives except on special occasions. Thus, most North Americans (and others) generally distinguish between their closest kin (parents and siblings) but lump together (as aunts, uncles, cousins) other kin on both sides of the family.

**Example:** Eskimos terminology is mainly used by Euro Americans as well as by some food foraging societies like Inuit and Eskimos. It is generally found in bilateral societies where the dominant kin group is kindred.

### c) Omaha terminology



The Omaha system of kin terminology is named after the Omaha of North America, but the system is found in many societies around the world, usually those with patrilineal descent.

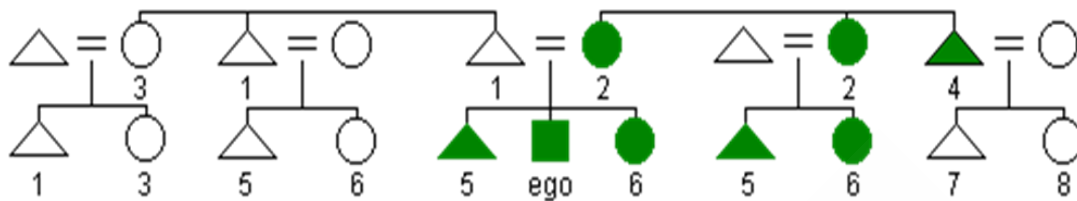
Father’s and Father’s brother are both named by same term. Mother and Mother’s sister are both named by same term. Also, mother’s brother’s daughter is also referred by this term. All male members of one’s mother’s patrilineage descent are also known by the same term (i.e., mother’s brother and his son).

It is apparent that relatives on the father’s and mother’s sides are grouped differently in this system. For members of one’s mother’s patrilineal group, we lump all male members together and all female member’s together regardless of their generation. Yet for member’s of one’s father’s patrilineal kingroup, we have different terms for male and female members of different generations.

Finally, in Omaha system Ego refers to male parallel cousin in the same way he refers to his brother. Ego also refers to female parallel cousin in the same way he refers to his sister (this is because father’s brother and mother’s sister are known as same term as father and mother)

**Example:** Among Sumi Naga tribe of Nagaland the mother’s brother and mother’s brother’s son are put under the same kin term. (MB=MBS= Ingu).

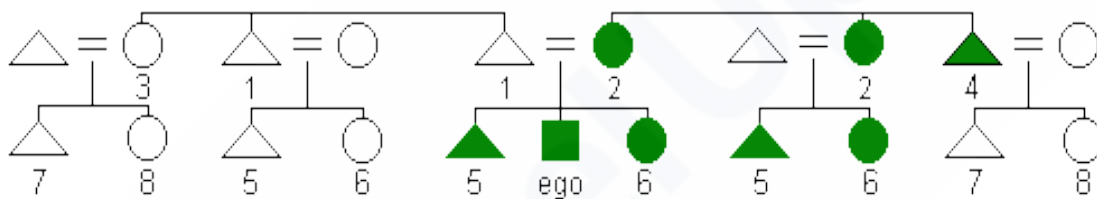
#### d) Crow terminology



Crow system is the mirror image of Omaha system. The same principle of lumping kin types are employed except that crow system is associated with matrilineal descent, so the individuals in my mother's matrilineal group are not lumped across generations, whereas individuals in my father's matrilineal group are.

I call both my mother and mother's sister by same term. I call my father's father's brother and my father's sister's son with same term (all male member of my father's matrilineal group). I call my father's sister and father's sister's daughter by the same term. And I refer my parallel cousin in the same way I refer to my brother and sister.

#### e) Iroquois terminology

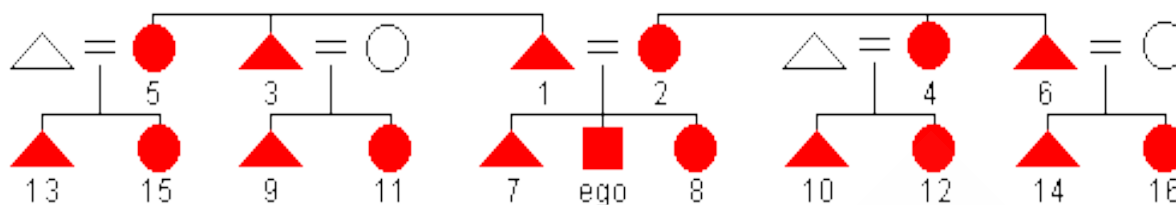


In the **Iroquois system** of kinship terminology, the father and father's brother are referred to by a single term, as are the mother and mother's sister; however, the father's sister and mother's brother are given separate terms. In one's own generation, brothers, sisters, and parallel cousins (offspring of parental siblings of the same sex—that is, the children of the mother's sister or father's brother) of the same sex are referred to by the same terms, which is logical enough considering that they are the offspring of people who are classified in the same category as EGO's actual mother and father. Cross cousins (offspring of parental siblings of opposite sex that is, the children of the mother's brother or father's sister) are distinguished by terms that set them apart from all other kin. In fact, cross cousins are often preferred as spouses, for marriage to them reaffirms alliances between related lineages or clans.

**Examples:** It is widespread terminology, used in rural Chinese societies also. In India, this terminology is used by Ao Naga tribe of Nagaland where parallel cousins are called as oti (male), oya(female) and cross cousins are called as amo (male), oku (female).

#### f) Sudanese terminology:

This system provides different labels to each genealogical position. It is descriptive in nature. Siblings are differentiated from cousins.



**Example:** In North Indian families, ego's parental generation has different name.

Father's elder brother = tau

Father's elder brother's wife = tai

Father's younger brother = chacha

Father's younger brother's wife = chachi

### Descent and Alliance

Historically, there was a clear division between those who saw kinship as based upon descent links between parents and children, and those who concentrated on alliance relationships created by marriage. Radcliffe-Brown was foremost among those who saw kinship primarily in terms of descent (1950: 4). Along with other descent theorists like Fortes and Jack Goody, he drew a clear distinction between kin, relatives by descent, and affines, relatives through marriage; hence his frequent use of the phrase 'kinship and marriage', implying that the latter was somehow external to the former. He further distinguished agnates, persons descended from a common ancestor through males only, from cognates, descendants of a common ancestor or ancestress counting descent through both males and females.

Radcliffe-Brown classified kinship systems according to how descent was recognized. Two particularly distinctive forms are patrilineal descent, reckoned through males only, and matrilineal descent, reckoned only through females. These should not be confused with patriarchy and matriarchy, for in both cases official power resides primarily with men; under patriliney a child acquires social status primarily from its father, whereas under matriliney its mother's brother is the key figure (the avunculate). Patrilineal descent is more common worldwide, perhaps because of the added complexities involved when men transmit rights to other men in the female line.

Fortes portrayed Tallensi society in Northern Ghana as entirely built around the lineage system (1970: 34). Whether he is worshipping ancestors, arranging marriages, allocating work, or exerting judicial authority, a Tallensi man's rights and responsibilities are determined by his position in his patrilineage. So, although lineage membership is determined by kinship criteria, its functions are economic and political. For this reason, Fortes drew a distinction between filiation and descent. Filiation stemmed from being the legitimate child of one's

parents and was normally bilateral, i.e., children were filiated to both parents. By contrast, jural status was determined by descent from a particular ancestor. In patrilineal cases, a man had descent and filiation links on his father's side, but only filiation on his mother's side. Filiation was relevant only in domestic contexts, whereas descent was a politico-jural matter, though the fact that it was expressed in the vocabulary of kinship provided an ideological bridge between the two domains.

**As for marriage, it was an ephemeral** (lasting for a short time or less important in making kinship) matter concerning only those directly involved, quite different from the enduring lineages on which Tallensi social structure was based. Yet marriages did form a 'web of kinship', which held society together by transcending the social barriers between lineages (1970: 82). It was in this context, too, that Fortes employed his controversial notion of complementary filiation.

#### Summary

The emphasis of descent theory was on the transmission of property, office, ritual complex and rights and obligations across the generation (either in father's or mother's line or both) which produces solidarity among the members of the group related by the ties of consanguinity. Lineage was seen as a corporate group, property holding and organizing labour on the lines of blood ties. In this set of ideas, **marriage was secondary**. Since one could not marry one's sister or daughter, because of the rules of incest taboo, one married from another group. The primary objective of marriage was the procreation of the descent group.

#### Alliance theory

Descent theory made sense in some lineage based African societies but proved inappropriate for much of Australasia and the Americas, either for the reasons just discussed or because **marriage alliance, far from being ephemeral, forms enduring patterns which persist over time**. For example, marriage among the Kachin of Burma is hypogamous, i.e., the bride's family is higher status than the groom's family (Leach 1961). It follows that marriage can only occur in one direction, and that any two lineages are in a wife-giver/wife-taker relationship which is just as persistent over time as the lineages themselves.

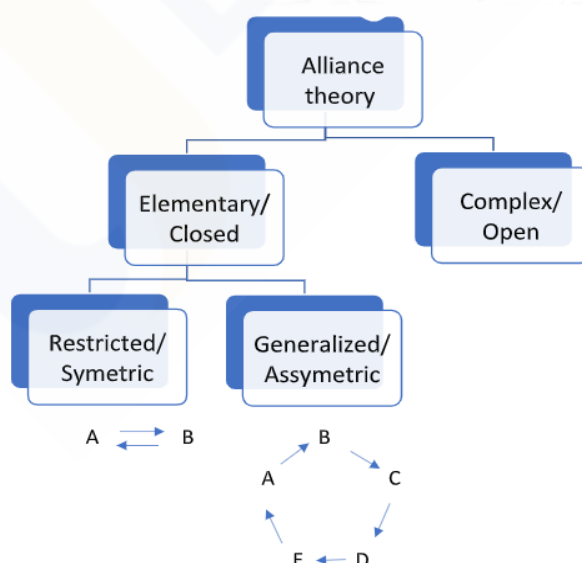
Alliance theory, which stresses marriage as a structural principle, is especially associated with Dumont, Leach and Needham, but its pioneer was Lévi-Strauss (1969 [1949]). He saw marriage as the other side of the coin from incest prohibitions: both helped prevent local groups from becoming sexually self-sufficient, and so encouraged wider social cohesion.

In his book, "Elementary Structure of Kinship", Levi Strauss gave alliance theory in opposition to what is called descent theory, which was put forth by British anthropologist (Radcliff Brown) and was the dominant theory in kinship studies till then. The emphasis of descent

theory was on the transmission of property, office, ritual complex and rights and obligations across the generation (either in father's or mother's line or both) which produces solidarity among the members of the group related by the ties of consanguinity. Lineage was seen as a corporate group, property holding and organizing labor on the lines of blood ties. In this set of ideas, marriage was secondary. Since one could not marry one's sister or daughter, because of the rules of incest taboo, one married from another group. The primary objective of marriage was the procreation of the descent group.

Levi Strauss's alliance theory brought marriage to the center. The function of marriage was not just procreative. It was far from important, for it led to the building of a string of relation between groups, respectively, called the wife givers and wife takers. In this context the concept of incest taboo acquires a central place. It is the 'pre-social' social fact, if society is a social fact, which explains and account for a number of other social facts, the fact that explains society, its emergence and functioning, is incest taboo. For Levi Strauss it is the 'cornerstone' of human society. The logical outcome of the prohibition of incest taboo is a system of exchange. It is not only the negative aspect of the rule of incest taboo that needs to be recognized, as was the case with descent theorist. What was significant to Levi- Strauss was positive aspect- it is not only that I do not marry my sister, but I also give her in marriage to another man whose sister then I marry. Sister exchange creates a 'federation' between exchanging groups. Societies are also distinguished with respect to where there is 'positive rule of marriage' (the genealogical specification of the relation to whom one should marry) and where such rule does not exist.

For Lévi-Strauss, there are two models of structure in the study of kinship and exchange in marriage. Elementary and Complex Exchange





Elementary structures according to him are those systems of kinship in which the kinship nomenclature itself provides an easy determination of the circle of consanguine and set of affines. Society with elementary structures of kinship are dominated by prescribed marriage system and hence he calls this system of exchange as “closed system of exchange”.

Complex structures, according to Levi-Strauss are those systems which at best define a circle of relatives i.e., consanguine and leave the choice of finding a spouse to “other mechanisms”. Hence, he calls this system as an “Open system” of exchange.

Thus, alliance is a crucial and inevitable mechanism towards integration of the society. Once the alliance relationships are established, they are usually perpetuated and hence the “solidarity” between the groups. Levi-Strauss views the cross-cousin marriage as the most elementary form of exchange.

Levi-Strauss explains two possible types of Elementary Exchange- Restricted Exchange and Generalized Exchange.

**Restricted Exchange** – is commonly found in those societies where there are dual organization or moieties. This type of exchange involves a direct transaction between 2 groups. This relationship is hence called as “Symmetrical”. ‘Wife givers’ also play the role of ‘wife takers’.

This system of exchange usually involves bilateral cross cousin marriages. A situation where the ego’s paternal aunt and maternal uncle are married to each other. In such a system the kinship terminology is only required to differentiate between parallel or cross cousin without having to differentiate whether they are patrilineal or matrilineal (because maternal cross cousin and paternal cross cousin are same – as my bua will be my mami)

**Generalized exchange**- in case of generalized exchange the number of groups involved in exchange are more. Moreover, another difference between Generalized and restricted lies in the nature of exchange itself. Generalized exchange is more or less indirect form of exchange. Because if A gives woman to B, B gives Woman to C, and so on and at some stages some along this chain gives woman to A, thus closing the cycle. Thus, this system of Exchange is asymmetrical.

Kachin Groups are supposed to marry in a circle ideally consisting of 5 groups.