

Introduction to kinship and gender

These lectures notes do not cover kinship terminology, alliance theory in details. They are complements to the lectures notes given by Prof Srivastava. Gender is not treated as a theory, but some important aspects are illustrated through the different ethnographies described in this document.

1-What is kinship:

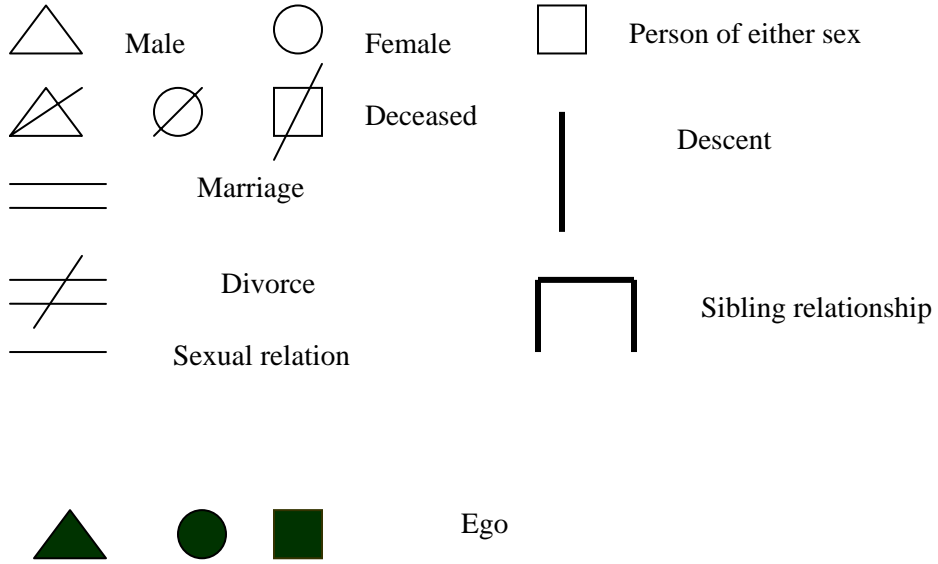
Kinship is conventionally defined as relationships between persons based on descent or marriage. If the relationship between one person and another is considered by them to involve descent the two are consanguineal relatives. If the relationship has been established through marriage, it is affinal. Thus, in western countries, relatives as one's mother, father, sister, brother, cousin, grandparents are consanguineal relatives, whereas one's father –in-law, sister-in-law and so on are affinal relatives. In the same country, one's uncle is a consanguineal relative if he is one's father's brother or mother's brother; but if the uncle is a father's sister's husband he is an affinal relative.

Societies vary in the extent to which kinship connections form the basis of their social, economic, and political structure. In some, kin groups are political groups, and economic relations are kinship relations. In other societies, the major groups in the society are based on other bases, and socio-economic institutions are separated at least technically from kinship. Yet even in the latter case kinship may play an unofficial strong role.

Kinship entails the idea of rights and obligations. Some of these are codified in law, as when legal rules specify the order of succession to property when a person dies without a will. In other cases, persons may disagree about what constitutes their kin based rights and obligations to another. Kinship is social before to be biological. It is evident from ethnographies and terminology: in some lineage societies brother's mother of ego is called a father and he is not the biological father. Indeed kinship is also an ideology of human relationships; it involves cultural ideas about how humans are created and the nature and meaning of their biological and moral connections with others. The dimensions of kinship are reflected cross-culturally in the different people ideas about human procreation. Carol Laderman (1983, 1991) encountered the local belief in Malaysia That a baby begins not in the mother's womb but in the father's brain, where it exists in a liquid form and transmitted to the mother through sexual intercourse. This example is but one of the many illustrations that we cannot develop here of the considerable variation among cultural beliefs of the nature and extend of male and female contribution to conception and fetal development.

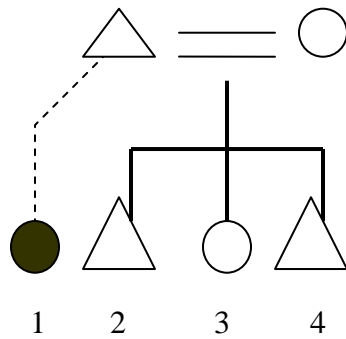
The ways in which a society defines and use relations of kinship can collectively be called a kinship system.

1-1 The kinship codes:



Anthropologists use the elements of the Kinship code to diagram kin relationships. Another convention in kinship notation involves a very simple set of symbols, as follows: M = mother; F = father; B = brother; Z = sister; W= wife; H = husband; D = daughter; S=son; P=parent; C= child.

One way to show adoption and sibling order on a kinship diagram



----- = adoption
1,2,3,4 = sibling order

of people which is not a group. But suppose that among music lovers you have a collection of people who are interested by opera and who meet regularly to go together to music events and for discussion. They form a group and regularly interact. Suppose now that this people collect money for their association, use the money to provide fellowships for young opera lovers should the organization buys property, the group becomes corporate. A corporate group, then, is a group of persons who collectively share rights, privileges and liabilities.

Societies construct descent categories, but not all the societies form real groups on this basis. Corporate descent groups operate very much like businesses or other kinds of corporations in societies.

1-2-2 Residence:

In any society, descent needs to be considered in conjunction with residence patterns, since the physical closeness of people related by descent has a lot to do with the strength of the ties between them. There are many possibilities. For example, the people of one descent group may all live in the same area. If this is the case, they are likely to be a solid group. Alternatively, the descent group may have grown quite large, so some subgroups may have hived off and gone elsewhere (segmentation). Over time, migrations of this sort may result in descent groups which are highly dispersed.

Residence is also important in the way it affects the structure of a domestic group which consists of people who live together and shares all their resources for their subsistence. All societies have conventions for residence. The standard post marital residence patterns are as follows:

- 1) Patrilocal: also called virilocal, where by a married couple lives with or near the groom's kins.
- 2) Matrilocal: or uxorilocal, whereby a married couple lives with or near the kin of either the groom or the bride.
- 3) Ambilocal : indifferent
- 4) Neolocal: whereby a married couple lives with kins neither from the groom nor the bride
- 5) Avunculocal : whereby a married couple moves to or near the residence of the groom's mother's brother
- 6) Natolocal : whereby a wife and a husband remain within their own natal kins and do not live together

Whatever the norms of residence, domestic groups or households are very fluid; they change their composition over the time as new members are born or recruited by alliance and others die, marry outside.

1-2-3 Marriage:

Aside from relations based on descent, kinship concerns affinal relationships, relation established through marriage. Marriage is found on diverse forms in different societies. And it is widely (though not universal) associated with the legitimization of the children.

There are three basic institutions or forms of marriage: monogamy, polygyny, or marriage of a man with several women, polyandry or marriage of a woman with several men (often brothers) like in Tibetan societies of Laddakh. On the world scale, monogamic marriage is the most common feature.

With regard to marriage, two other important terms have to be known: exogamy and endogamy. Exogamy refers to the rule whereby persons must marry outside a certain social group or category. In many societies, descent groups are exogamous. Another example would be a society that impose a rule of village exogamy. Conversely, Endogamy refers to the rule whereby persons must marry with a certain social group or category (caste).

2 KINSHIP THEORY

2-1 From social structure to culture

Anthropologists saw kinship as important primarily because it was understood to constitute the basis of social structure; kinship was seen to play a fundamental role in the formation of many societies. By the 1980s most anthropologists came to agree that among many people and different cultural contexts kin were often made, not born. This realization opened the way for a shift in kinship studies, one that saw kin relations as not necessarily established once (through birth acts) and for all but as processual, as established historically and maintained over the time through various actions. The work of Janet Carsten (1995) shows how among Malays on the island of Langkawi, people are not born once and for all into kinship positions, but rather kinship emerges over time through acts of receiving and giving food and through sharing of hearth space. These actions can create kinship between people who are not considered biological kins.

2-2 Incest and exogamy

Most human societies have incest taboo. The human incest taboo is a ban on sexual relations between primary kins: mother-son, father-daughter, and brother-sister. Some societies include also other relatives in their own category of incestuous union, but we find common to nearly all societies is the ban on sex between primary kins. The incest taboo, however, is not universal among humans. It is well known that royal families of ancient Egypt, Peru (Incas), and Hawaii allowed or encouraged brother-sister marriages.

For decades, anthropologists have been interested in explaining why human societies have an incest taboo, why it is nearly universal, and why people in so many societies regard incest with horror and disgust. Claude Lévy-Strauss (1969) saw the taboo as a key to what it meant to be human rather than animal. With this taboo humans marked themselves off as being part of human culture as opposed to animal nature. If it did not exist, we would not need kinship systems to regulate human reproduction. However, Fox has convincingly shown that theorists were mistaken when they tried to locate the origin of human kinship systems in the emergence of non incestuous human mating and causality in the risk of so close inbreeding. As Fox put it, a mother-children group could settle down to a cozy little inbreeding arrangement and be totally self-sufficient for purposes of reproduction.

Some anthropologists have also linked exogamy to incest taboo. Obviously, the notions can be related in the sense that if a society bans sex between two related people; it would be rather stupid to allow them to marry. The reverse does not hold.

However, exogamy, unlike the incest taboo, is rather easy to explain: it helps foster peaceable relationships between groups. If a group forbids marriages within itself, it is forced to acquire spouses from other groups, and when that happens, harmonious relationships between the groups are promoted by the fact of their interdependency for spouses.

3 The power of patriline

3-1 Introduction:

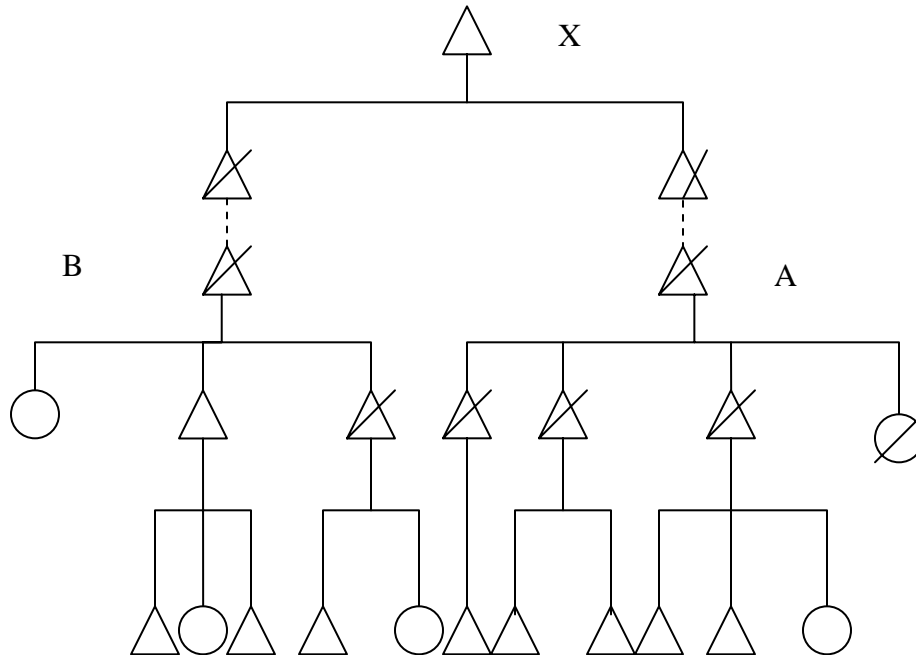
We saw in the preliminaries that one advantage of a mode of descent is that people can apply it to form groups within a society. Here, we will see how it works with patrilineal descent. At the top

3-2 Lineage and clan:

A group of people who trace their descent to a common ancestor through known links is called a lineage. If the people do so patrilineally –that is, they trace their descent to their common ancestor through male links- they are a patrilineage. In some societies, lineages are corporate descent groups; in other they are not. Another kind of descent group is called a clan. A clan is like a lineage except the members do not know all of the genealogical connections to the founder.

Here in the following diagram two lineages A and B consider they are from the same patrilineal clan because they are all descendants, through male links, of a common ancestor. All together A and B believe to be the sons of X and X is the clan name which has been inherited patrilineally. Children always take the clan name of the father. Clans are inevitably given names, and no matter how many generations have passed, everyone knows his or her clan by the patrilineal inheritance of the name.

Another difference between a clan and a lineage is that the founding ancestor of the clan is often a mythological figure –that is a god, a plant, an animal, or a special object (totemism) or more rarely a holy person.



Two lineages of one clan

It is often the case that a society has both clans and lineages, and, if so the lineages will be subunits of the clan, as in the hypothetical example given here.

One example of patrilineal clan organization is the ancient Roman clan, or *gens*. This organization was discussed by Lewis Henry Morgan in the nineteenth century. It was Morgan who first noted organizational similarities among early Roman tribes and certain Native

American Indian clans. In this respect he went far beyond previous scholars who had seen the Roman gens as merely a ceremonial institution and not a corporate kinship group based on patrilineal descent.

Morgan wrote that early on, the founding of Rome (around 750 BC) there were a number of independent tribes united in a loose confederacy. Tribes were subdivided into gentes (clans). The legendary Romulus was said to have united a number of these and gentes of other groups such as the Sabines were added. Over a century, 300 gentes were united at Rome, and the chiefs of these gentes formed a government.

The gens was strictly patrilineal. Morgan summarized the rights and obligations encompassed by the Roman gens as follows:

- 1) Mutual rights of succession to the property of deceased gentiles
- 2) The possession of a common burial place
- 3) Common religious rites; *sacra gentilia*.
- 4) The obligation not to marry in the gens
- 5) The possession of land in common
- 6) Reciprocal obligations of help, defense, and redress of injuries
- 7) The right to bear the gentile name
- 8) The right to adopt strangers in the gens
- 9) The right to elect and depose its chiefs

According to Morgan, the corporate nature of the gens disappeared as soon as property came into the hands of individuals.

The early upper-class roman family has been noted for the rather extraordinary powers vested in the man head, or *paterfamilias*

3-3 Patrilocality:

As we have seen most patrilineal societies are patrilocal. In domestic units the males patrilineal relatives stay together for men, the patrilineal group is literally grounded in residence. United by blood and residence the potential for solidarity is high. So are the potentials for conflict and jealousy, of course. But if these men recognize some lines of authority (per example the elders), an organized social life is possible.

Patrilineal societies tend to be patrilocal, but there are some exceptions to this rule: for example the Mundurucu Indians, a tribal group settled on a tributary of the Amazon River in Brazil, are patrilineal with matrilocal residence. In this case, men at marriage move to the villages of their wives. Her they do not reside in their wife dwellings but a central men's house along with other married-in-men and adults but unmarried sons of the village women.

Parents in strongly patrilineal societies often say that sons are necessary to continue the line; to serve as heirs; to provide labor or income to a household; to care for parents in old age; and, often to assist parents in a spiritual way after death.

3-4 THE NUER CASE

(See political anthropology for a detailed introduction to their ethnography)

3-4-1 Presentation:

The warfare and territorial expansion of the Nuer, halted by British colonization, were important because they undoubtedly influenced some features of their kinship system.

The largest Nuer political units were what Evans-Pritchard called tribes, headed by Leopard-Skin chiefs who were sacred persons but had no effective political authority. The real political life of the Nuer was interwoven with their patrilineal kinship structure, organized in lineages and clans. These units regulated feuds blood feuds, warfare, and the settling of disputes.

Nuer clans were exogamous. The lineages, in turn were subdivided into segments, the smallest of which were about three to five generations deep. In addition, the lineages were residentially dispersed, so that each village contained homesteads representing different lineages and each such homestead representing different lineages and each such home stead had lineage kin in other villages. Villages were themselves corporate groups, holding the grazing areas, fishing pools, and plots of land in common.

The Nuer were patrilocal in that wives generally moved into the villages and homesteads of their husbands, but various other arrangements were possible.

In many respects, Nuer males and females led contrasting, and often quite separate lives. For instance, the sexes moved into adulthood in very different ways. For women the transition was gradual; and the first ceremonial attention a Nuer woman received was during her wedding. But for men, approaching adulthood meant that their identities would be bound up with warrior hood and strong associations with other males. . Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, young males were initiated into adulthood though a painful ritual that involved the ceremony of *gar* (*incisions* across the forehead). Only after initiation was a man permitted to marry.

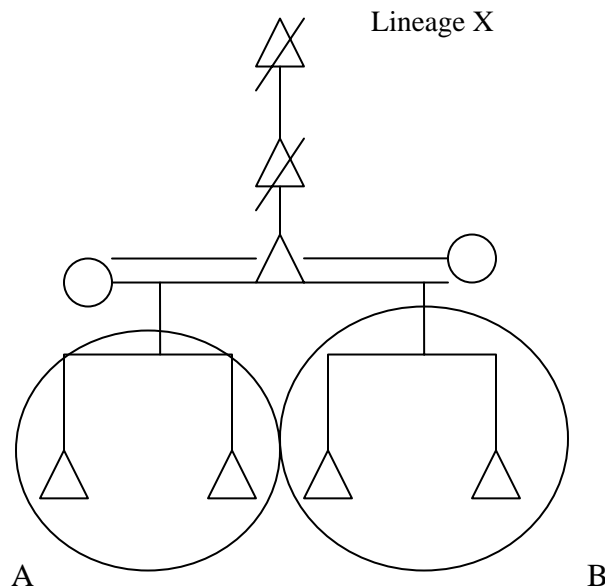
Within villages were homesteads, consisting minimally of a man and his wife (or wives) grouped around a cattle byre. Wives have separated huts around the byre. The byre considered as the hearth of the homestead was seen as a male place primarily (though women could freely enter it): “Very early in life small boys are driven by their father or elder brothers away from their mothers’ huts to the byre, the place of the men folk of the family, where they eat, sleep, and spend the leisure hours of the day. When they are about seven or eight years of age they sleep there instead of in their mothers’ huts , where the women and girls eat and sleep near which they spend most of the day” (Evans-Pritchard) .

The cattle byre, representing male space and serving as a kind of men’s club, was also associated with the patrilineage itself. Cattle, the economic mainstay of Nuer life, were owned by men. Wives were given certain cows to milk by husbands but they did not really own them and had no rights to dispose of them.

Although they did not own cattle, women were considered to be economically crucial and central to the home because only they could milk the cows.

In Nuer social life the relationships of kinship were as important as those based on descent.

Women had a very particular role to play in the system of which these relationships were a part. First a married woman reproduced for her husband’s lineage, and her children became members of it.



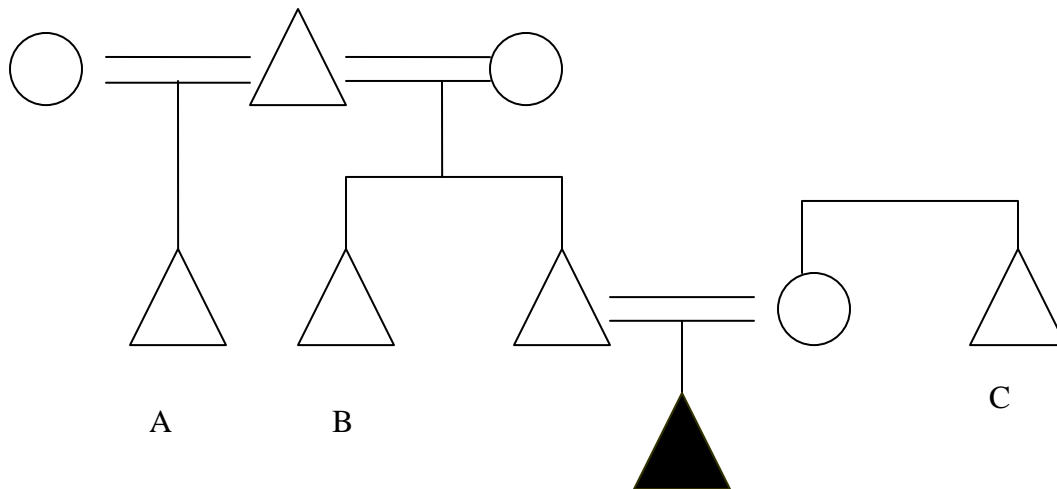
Nuer Brothers from a polygynous marriage. Here the males of group A and B are all equal members of lineage X and are patrilineal kin to one another. But those of group A feel a kind of special cohesiveness and a separateness from group B because their mothers are different persons. The Nuer called all the people of either group A or B brothers of the hut (kwi dwiel). But when referring to paternal half-brothers (from A and B together), they called them brothers of the byre (kwi luak). Brothers of the hut were inevitably closer than half-brothers who only share a byre. Nuer recognize that whereas full brothers pool their resources, helping each other even to the point of forging their rights, paternal half-brothers insist on their rights and try to avoid their obligations. Nuer are not surprised at coldness between half-brothers and disputes between them. When a polygynous father died the various sets of half-brothers would likely split into separate groups. Thus there was always potential fission in the group due to the separate loyalties engendered by the separate mothers reproducing the lineage.

The idea of difference between separate mothers seems to have affected the relations over the generations; for instance the Nuer spoke of one's father's paternal half-brother as a kind of wicked uncle that is someone who cannot be trusted.

Among Nuers, there is a special relation between a male and his mother's brother, but the sentiment extended to other kins on the mother side as well. A second role played by women in this system was to link the children to their non lineage kins. Relations with the maternal uncle are close and affective and tender than relationships with one's paternal kin.

As Evans-Pritchard says: "Rights in the herd, duties of blood revenge, and status in the community hold a man to his father's kin, but with these go jealousy about cattle, resentment about authority, and personal rivalries. The paternal ties are stronger, if there is a touch of hardness in them. The maternal ties are weaker and for this reason are tendered".

The Nuer male's relationships with different types of uncle is represented in the following diagram:



Ego has a close, affective relationship with the man C; he has a more distant relationship with the man B; and he is likely to mistrust the man A.

Looking at the system as a whole, and also remembering women's domestic roles, especially the central role of milking cows, we see that women are affecting the system in three ways: they are

continuing the patriline; they are pulling some men together, and as sources of fission they are pulling other men apart. In their role as reproducing wives they both create and destroy. Thus women's roles within the structure of Nuer kinship and descent are related, to certain ambivalence towards women expressed by Nuer males as a latent hostility between the sexes. Nuer mythology tells that:

"Nuer men also say that women have bad mouths and that evil comes out of them, and they account for this by a story which relates that the mouths of women used to be, before God changed their position, where their vaginas are now; and they say that women are sensual and fickle, God having at their request, as another story relates, cut their hearts in two so that one half might be added to the male organ to give them greater pleasure in coitus. "

This account is interesting in its phrasing of the hostility toward women in such graphic, sexual terms and in the imputation of female greed. But the point we have to stress is that it is within the framework of Nuer kinship that we most clearly see the forces of male ambivalence and hostility towards women.

3-4-2 Marriage and children of the Nuer:

Evans-Pritchard mentioned that monogamous marriage was much commoner among Nuer but he adds that polygyny was frequent enough to have set his stamp, through its association with wealth and social influence, on the lineage system. Evans-Pritchard claimed that the Nuer men regarded polygyny as the ideal form of family.

Along with polygyny, the Nuer practiced a form of the levirate, whereby a widow is inherited by her dead husband's brother. Among the Nuer the levirate was optional for the woman, and even if she joined the brother he was considered a pro-husband, and the woman remained the legal wife of the dead husband. The sororate, whereby a man marries the sister of his dead wife, was also practiced; but among the Nuer this could happen only if the dead wife had been childless.

In all forms of marriage, a core concern of the Nuer was the acquisition of male heirs for patriline. Nuer notions of immortality were tied to the siring of sons.

The ideas of Nuer about marriage and paternity and their related practices were intimately bound up with cattle, which the Nuer used to pay bride wealth. A legal marriage among Nuer was a marriage cemented with bride wealth, or the transfer of wealth from the kin of the groom to the kin of the bride. This bride wealth was seen not as a payment for the bride but, rather, as a transfer of wealth that guaranteed *the rights of the husband's patriline to the future children of this woman*.

The practice of bride wealth marriage had an important consequence. In order to bring in a bride, a Nuer group needed to amass a lot of cattle for bridewealth. Thus, among the Nuers, daughters as well as sons were necessary and valued. Unlike some other patrilineal groups, the Nuer did not regard the birth of a daughter as unfortunate or sorrowful, for a daughter was a bringer of cattle, a provider of bridewealth for her brothers.

Marriages were usually initiated by the young couple and then approved by the two sets of kin. Females married at about seventeen or eighteen to older males of varied ages. The marriage proceeded by stages, and at each stage more cattle was transferred from the groom's kin to those of the bride. The first stage called *larcieng* (betrothal) signified that both sets of kins approved the marriage. The next stage, *ngut* (wedding) was held at the bride home. During the ceremony, the groom's and the bride's kins called out their spear-names or clans-names to make public affirmation of the difference of the clans and in this respect the marriage is proper (clans are strictly exogamous). After is *mut*, the consummation of the marriage. After *mut* the marriage could still be called off, by the bride or the groom of a kin group, in which case the cattle has to be redraw to the groom's kin. At this stage the young married do not leave together. The last stage, which completes the marriage, was the birth of the first child. Between the *mut* and the

birth, the wife remains in her father's home, where she was given her own hut for night visit of the husband.

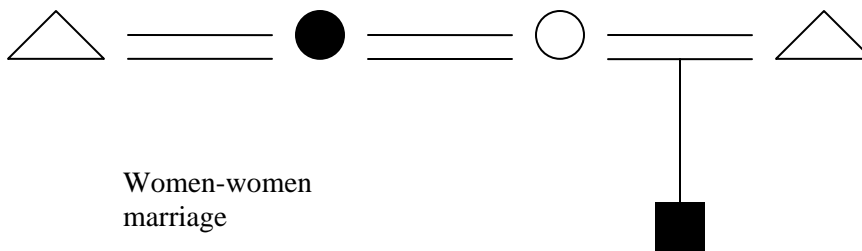
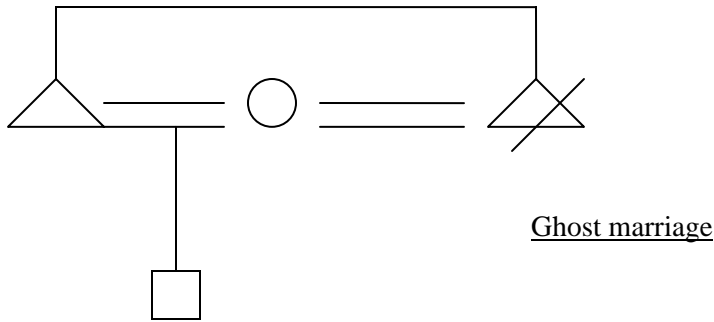
With the birth of a child and the movement of the bride to her husband's home, the marriage was considered complete. Nevertheless, there was one last stage to undergo: the birth of a second child. With only one child present, the marriage could be ended by divorce. But once a second child was born, divorce was no longer possible because after this point bride wealth cattle could never be returned. Now, at this stage, a woman could leave her husband (what we would call separation). She could even take up with another man and live with him. What the finality of her marriage meant was that 1) she could not remarry, and 2) should she bear other children in the future, begotten by whomever, they were automatically her legal husband's children and members of her lineage/clan. This is the reason all the cattle were given.

In another hand, needless to say, one reason for canceling a marriage would have been the couple's failure to have children.

In addition not all domestic unions were formal marriages since it was possible for a woman, even with two children, to leave her husband and take up with another, living in his home. Evans-Pritchard refers to this type of union as concubinage and distinguished three conditions for women: widow, wife and unmarried for such an union. In the First case, the widow takes up with some new man to avoid levirate; in the second, a wife (after bearing two or more children) leaves her husband and lives with another man; and in the third case, the couple could have married, with bride wealth, after having a child. Or the man could simply give four to six cows to the women's parents in order to claim this one child but not marry the woman.

What happened if the original union was infertile? In this case, polygyny, the taking of another wife or wives, would have been essential and the first wife might or might not have been divorced. Let's say the first wife was not divorced and the man took two more wives but none of the three wives ever became pregnant. We would consider it likely that the man was the one with fertility problem, and so would the Nuer. At this point there would still have been other options available to him. One is what we can call *blind eye adultery* whereby the man turns a blind-eye to an adulterous affair on the part of one or more wives in the hope that someone will get pregnant. He will be the father of whatever child is produced. Evans-Pritchard reported that older sonless Nuer men exercised this option, but younger men were still too concerned with their sexual rights in their wives to consider it.

It could happen also that a man could die before getting married at all; and yet it has been said that all Nuer men must have a male heir. As it turns out, the Nuer system had prepared for even this possibility with the very distinctive option of ghost marriage. In this case, a patrilineal kinsman, such as brother or cousin, would take a wife in the name of a deceased, childless man, and have children by her in the dead man's name as illustrated in the following figure.



Arranging a ghost marriage then became a part of the cure for the illness or misfortune. What happens also if a woman is barren? In that case, the Nuer instituted yet another ingenious marriage form that transformed female bareness into a kind of reproductive potential. This is the institution woman-woman marriage as shown in the previous diagram. As far as the natal patriline of a barren woman is concerned, this woman is counted as a man in every respect and is able to reproduce the patriline with the woman-woman alliance. All the forms of alliance we have enumerated are striking for their sheer variety. In all these cases is the precision and clarity with which Nuer allocate children to husbands' lineages.

3-5 THE NEPALESE BRAHMANS

3-5-1 Presentation:

Nepal is a small country in the Himalayas, with a population of around 27 million in 2005. It lies between India in the south and Tibet (China). Its numerous ethnic groups speak different languages. Many of these groups are classified as Indo-Nepalese speakers and are Hindu. Other follow Buddhist traditions, often mixed with Hindu practices.

The ancestors of the Indo-Nepalese came from North-India, beginning as early the twelfth century A.D. when Indian people were fleeing Moslem invasions.

In most areas of Nepal, the Indo-Nepalese became dominant. Few words have to be said about the Nepalese caste system. Castes in Nepal are ranked status groups with the ranking sanctioned by religion. The whole system is expressed through classical Hindu religious ideas concerning purity and pollution with the classical hierarchy (Brahmans, kshatriyas, sudras).

Caste endogamy is both an ideal and a norm in Nepal, and this is especially true for Brahmans. The notions of purity and pollution, so important in the caste system, are also fundamental to kinship and gender among Brahmans. Just as higher castes are considered more pure than lower

castes, males as a category are considered more pure than females. The reason: women menstruate, and menstrual blood is considered an extremely polluting substance. Because women are inevitably polluted when they menstruate, they must take a ritual bath afterward in order to restore a state of relative purity. For Brahman men, sexual activity is considered to be not only polluting but physically draining and spiritually distracting.

In rural areas Brahmans live in small villages, usually mixed with other caste groups. Households are organized around farming, although some family members may have off-farm jobs that bring cash income. Like the Nuer, Brahmans are both patrilineal and patrilocal. But as you should have anticipated, there are striking contrasts between Nepalese Brahmans and Nuer particularly in the area of marriage.

In some Nepalese villages, the virginity of brides was safeguarded by arranging the marriages of females early, often they started menstruating. In her husband home, the wife is expected to be shy, demure and obedient, and her behavior is carefully supervised by her in-laws, especially her mother in-law. Marriages are arranged by parents. A great deal of time goes into the search of a bride and the arranging, negotiating, and carrying out of a marriage union. For a female, marriage is also an initiation into adulthood and into her caste; without marriage a woman is not considered an adult or even a full caste person. Males experience a separate initiation at around age eight, through which they assume adulthood and caste membership.

In rural areas Brahmans groups seek brides for the labor they can provide as well as for their fertility. Polygyny is permitted, but it is rare and socially approved only if the first wife remains childless. For men marriage is an important life transition, but it is relatively smooth one since he remains home surrounded by his relatives, all of whom believe that he and his parents have unquestionable authority over the bride. For females, marriage is traumatic, and the adaptations a woman must make are likely to be difficult for a number of years. At the end of a wedding, a particular ceremony (*muck herne*, seeing the face) emphatically underlines the low position of the bride in her new home.

After her mother has seen her face, the bride must touch her mother in-law's feet with her forehead (*dhok dine*). Following a period of boot camp existence, during which the bride is given heavy chores, watched, and criticized openly, she begins her rise in the household hierarchy through a demonstration of successful fertility.

Following a period of "boot camp" existence, during which the bride is given heavy chores, watched, and criticized openly, she begins her rise in the household hierarchy through a demonstration of successful fertility. With the birth of each child, especially sons, she becomes a more trusted family member and is treated more leniently. Eventually her senior-in-laws die off, her husband sets up his own home, and she becomes the most senior woman in the household, where her sons will bring in new brides for her to put through the whole experience again.

3-5-2 The patriline

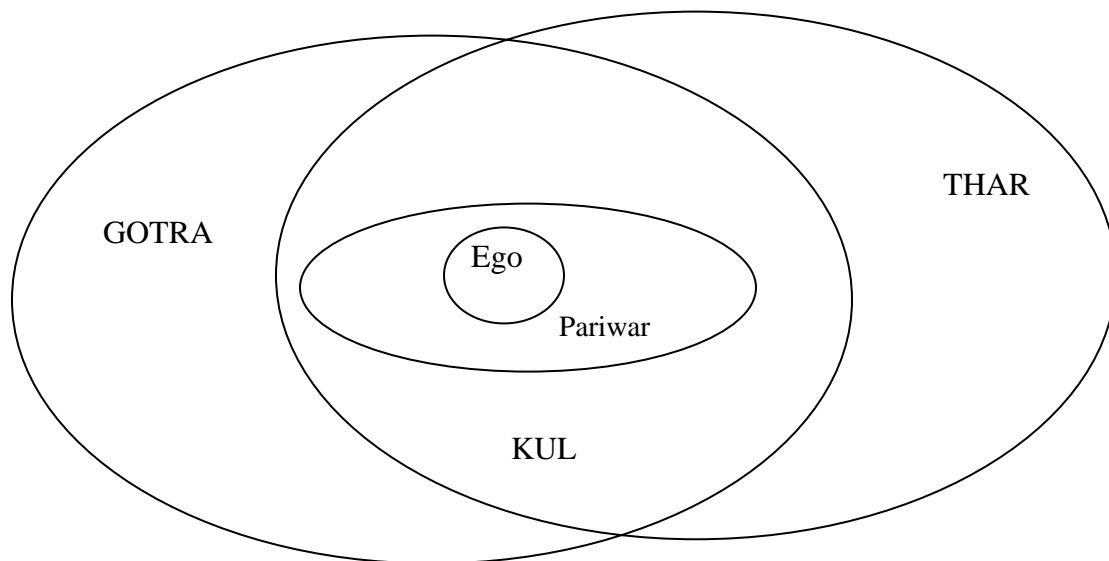
Ever Brahman belongs to two patrilineal categories: the *thar* and the *gotra*. Males assume the *thar* and the *gotra* affiliations of their fathers, and women at marriage take the *thar* and *gotra* names of their husbands. Both the *thar* and the *gotra* are ideally exogamous. The *gotra* name is evoked at certain religious rituals and is seen as a kind of religious and spiritual category. If *thar* and *gotra* are spiritual categories, they are not actual kinship groups. That is, members of a *gotra*, for instance do not come together for any purpose, own any land in common. Though both are sometimes translated as clan, neither is a clan in the sense referred earlier in this document. Rather, the *thar* and the *gotra* are important for personal identification and for specifying those people whom one cannot, or at least should not marry.

The kinship unit that is a group and has significance in ordinary life is the *kul*, or patrilineage. Women are born into the *kuls* of their fathers and later join the *kuls* of their husbands. But they

are only peripheral members of their husbands 'kuls and do not participate in certain kul activities. Kuls may be quite large (five to six generations deep), or can be limited to a single family.

The essence of the kul is that the members all worship the same set of lineage gods (*kul devta*). Worshipping occurs both separately by individual household and communally in a gathering of the whole kul. In addition, kul members must observe so-called death pollution for one another. When one kul member dies, the others must conduct a number of rituals and maintain a number of restrictions on food, clothing and behavior. The length of time for death pollution observance varies according to how closely a person is patrilineally related to the deceased kul member. Beneath the level of the kul is another group, *the pariwar*, or household – the most important patrilineal unit in Brahman society. The pariwar is the most important unit of both production and consumption. The eldest male of this unit serves as head of this unit and exercises considerable authority over the others.

According to descent theory, we find obviously that thar and gotra are descent categories; the kul is a descent group. Thar and gotra are separate categories but they overlap at the level of the kul. In addition, although ego's kul members share his thar and gotra affiliations, other people in ego's thar or gotra are not necessary



Relatives of ego as it is shown in the relative diagram just above.

Nepalese Brahmins believe that, ideally, the pariwar should cover several generations, with sons of one family bringing in their wives to this unit, reproducing children, and staying together until the death of their father or even longer. In actual practice, however, married sons of one family usually split up and separate their property before the common father dies. Even so, most couples start out married life within the husband's household and are well into raising their own children before the group splits.

When this split does occur, the brothers divide the family land and property and are well into raising their own children before the group splits.

When the split does occur, the brothers divide the family land and property equally. Women do not normally inherit in this system, though a widow can hold land or other property in trust for her sons. Women at marriage are given a dowry of clothing, jewelry, and households' utensils. Using this basic patrilineal framework, we will examine the nature of the Brahmin patriline and the ways in which member relationships and particularly gender are interwoven.

- a) The males of a patriline should maintain solidarity ;
- b) The lines should continue, that is sons should be produced;
- c) The line of the descent should be kept pure.

3-5-2 Male Patrilineal Solidarity:

Elsewhere in Nepal, one woman very frequently makes the following accusation against her sister in law: "My elder sister in-law used *tuna* (black magic) against my brother so that he would separate from mother and father. He had said he wouldn't separate from them until the day he died. So sister in-law said some spells over some food and gave it to him to eat". (Bennett, 1983). These accusations are typical.

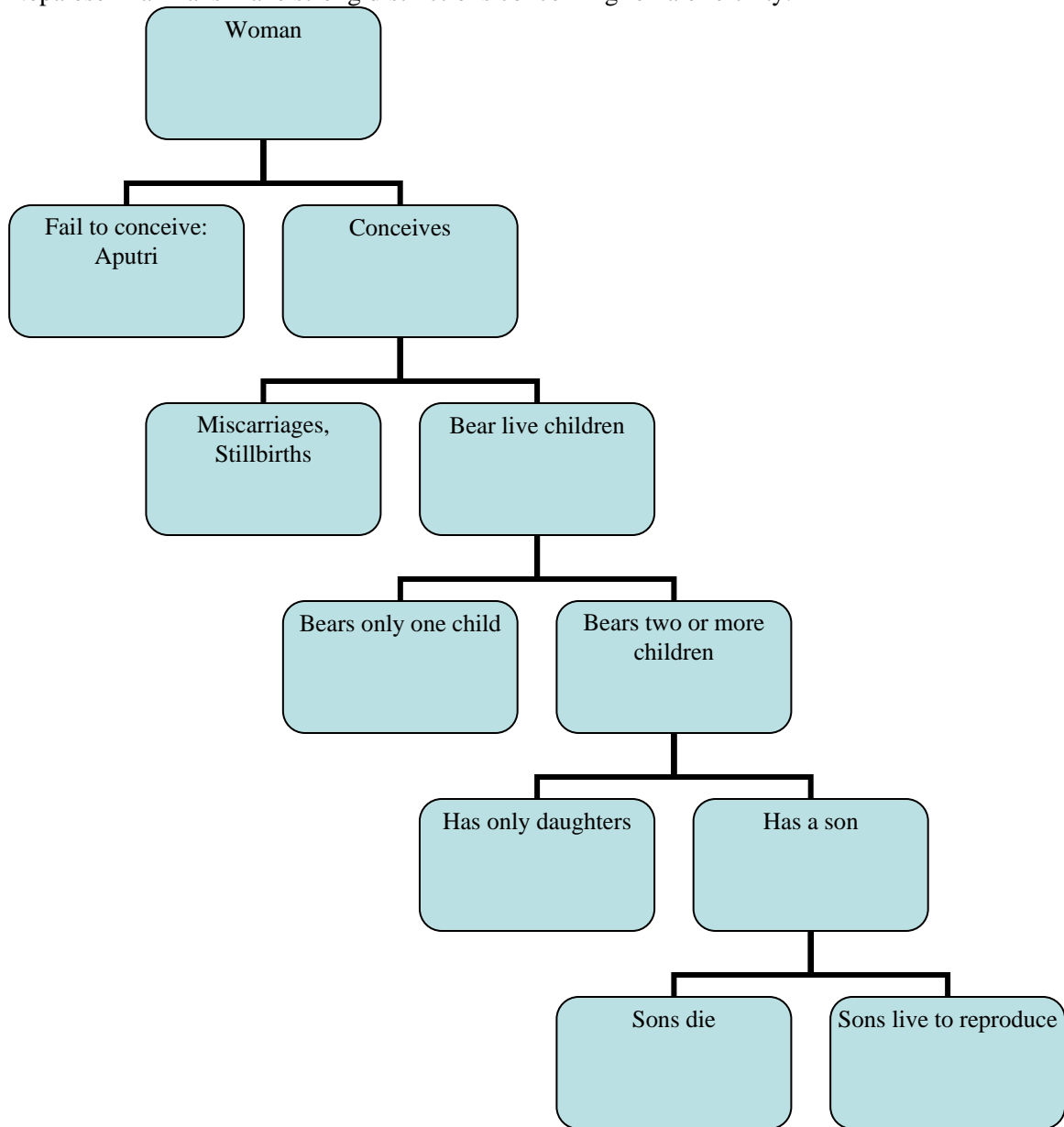
In most of the cases, married-in, or affinal members and mostly women are seen as a threat. At stake here is the idea of *male patrilineal solidarity*. We are already familiar with this idea, having encountered it in relation to the Nuer. As was true of the Nuer, close patrilineal kin among Nepalese Brahmans among rural areas have a great deal to do with one another. They live with or near one another, stand to inherit each other lands and in innumerable ways are dependent upon one another cooperation's and assistance. The lineage (*kul*) embodies the cultural idea of the importance of male patrilineal solidarity.

Why wives are seen as a threat to male patrilineal solidarity? In this respect the Nepalese Brahmans are somewhat different from the patrilineal Nuer society, who see women in polygynous marriage as the focus of split between half-brothers and their descendants. Among Brahmans for whom polygyny is rare the idea is not that women will pull half-brothers or their own separate sets of sons apart but, rather, those they will pull apart full brothers, their separate husbands. According to Bennett, wives are seen by men and by other women of the husband family as manifesting the dangerous tendency of self-interest. One informant told to Bennett: "if the husband doesn't love you, nobody in the house loves you". And it gets worse. Bennett reports that women told frankly that sex, as the means to have children and as the means to influence their husband in their favor, was the most effective weapon in the battle for security and to gain respect in the husband's house.

3-5-3 Patriline continuity:

Among Nepalese Brahmans there is a great concern to have sons: to continue the patriline, to provide heirs, to provide household labor or income, and to provide parents with care takers in old age and after deaths. The role of the sons in the funeral of parents, and in their spiritual welfare in the after life, entails deeply felt religious beliefs. When a parent dies, a son must observe a number of austerities and conduct crucial rituals to ensure the safe passage of the parent's soul from this world to the next. They have to perform the annual *shraddha* a commemorative ceremony in which is ritually fed and thus sustained – not only for his parents but also for his patrilineal ancestors ascending three generations. Brahmans profess that any failure or negligence in the performance of these ceremonies places the departed soul in peril. In particular, if the funeral rituals were performed improperly or not at all the departed would become a "ghost" (*bhut* or *prêt*) rather a proper ancestor. Such ghosts are believed to wander about in painful hunger and inflict harm on the living. If a person simply has no son at the time of his or her death, another patrilineal male relative can be called in to perform the rituals, but the idea is disturbing.

Thus, both Brahmins men and women are very concerned about producing sons. Daughters may be welcome; too, although their birth is generally met with less joy, and if a couple already has daughters, another one may be disappointing. The pressure on women is stronger. Nepalese Brahmins make strong distinctions concerning female fertility.



The more inauspicious ladies are the *aputri*, considered so unworthy that the gods will not accept their offerings. At the next level of the diagram, among women who have conceived, is a separation between those who have borne live children and who have experienced only miscarriages or stillbirths. The latter are less inauspicious than the *aputri* condition, but they suffer ostracism nevertheless.

Regarding women who have given birth; another distinction is drawn between those who bear two or more children and those who bear only one. An older one-child woman is called a *kaga bandhya*,

a word that comes from the name of a crow that, it is said, gives birth to only one offspring in its lifetime. For Hindus this crow, like the lowest of the castes, is very impure.

Despite their ideology, Nepalese Brahmins, in contrast to Nuer, have very few options by which to acquire children in case of fertility failure. Polygyny may not help barren women. If a woman is fertile but her husband is sterile, she is not free to divorce and remarry. Brahmin society also does not allow for surrogate genitors, ghost marriages, or woman-woman marriages. Nor is adoption a realistic possibility for Brahmin couples, unless it involved a very close patrilineal orphan.

3-5-4 Purity of descent:

In order for a couple to produce caste –pure Brahmin children, two things beyond biological parenthood are necessary:

First the man and the woman must be themselves Brahmins; and second, they must be united in a religiously sanctioned marriage performed by a priest. This type of marriage is called *the gift of the virgin*. (*Kanadyan*) marriage. Each of them has to maintain Brahmin status through marriage and sexual behavior. The man must avoid any sexual relation with an untouchable caste woman. However, he may have premarital relations with any other caste lady.

For women, the situation is different. A Brahmin woman becomes a full-caste person only through religious marriage to a Brahmin male. In terms of sexual relations, she is restricted to her Brahmin husband.

If an unmarried woman is known not to be virgin, she would lose her Brahmin status. A Brahmin woman may only one gift of the virgin marriage. Widow Remarriage is not possible. Once properly married, a woman fall in adulterous affair would lose her Brahmin status and so her children. This, according to Bennett, makes Brahmins women, in their roles as wives dangerous. These claims make clearly the inferiority of wives condition. As we have said; in terms of male patrilineal solidarity, affinal women are seen as divisive and threatening. In terms of patriline continuity, they are crucial. But in terms of the third concern, purity of descent, these women are dangerous, because of their potential as seducers of husbands and polluters of lineages through their illicit sexuality. Moreover, women are less pure than men. Affinal women become a sort of necessary evil. The concern with female sexuality and its dangers is most vividly represented in the *tij-rishi-panchami*. (A three days annual festival). The first *tij* is intended to prolong the life; the second *rishi panchami* is to purify women from the sin of having unknowingly touched a man while menstruating during the previous year.

3-5-5 The superiority of daughters:

We may distinguish between the dominant patrifocal model of Brahmin kinship and the submerged, less visible, but still important filiafocal model. Women, we have seen are important for the reproduction of the lineage, but in the same time there is a filiafocal undercurrent: women are important not as wives but in their roles of daughters or sisters. In contrast to affinal women, these consanguineal women are considered sacred to their fathers and brothers (as well as to their mothers and some other kin), and they are literally worshipped by fathers/brothers on certain religious occasions. Since a daughter is sacred and religiously superior to her father, he receives religious merit by giving her in marriage to another family. Just as a daughter is sacred and high to her father, so too is the man she marries, her father's son-in-law. Thus filiafocal relationships are central to the whole kinship system. Mother Hood is highly valued.

(Reference Bennett, Lynn. 1976 Sex and Mother hood among the Brahmins and Chetris of East central Nepal. Contributions to Nepalese studies 3: 1-52)

1983 Dangerous Wives and sacred sisters: Social and symbolic roles of High caste women in Nepal. Columbia University Press)

*4-MATRILINEAL SOCIETIES
EXAMPLE OF THE NAYAR SYSTEM*

Matrilineal societies exist. We will not develop them. But it is important to remember that matrilineal means here simply descent through females. It is not synonymous with matriarchy. Seeing matrilineal males in control, some anthropologists as Meyer-Fortes, went so far as to urge that we seen descent in matrilineal systems as proceeding not from a mother to her child but, rather, from the mother's brother to the sister's son. Although this argument had some merit, it pushed the women too far in the background, where their own kinship roles, interests, strategies, and powers became all too easy to ignore.

The complexity of matrilineal system is due to the puzzle provided by the question as to how matrilineal societies cope with the combination of authority of men and descent through women. The Nayar are a good example.

4-1 The Nayar kinship system:

The Nayar numbering more than 2 million people live in the state of Kerala. Their origin is uncertain, but they are presumed to have been a matrilineal hill tribe who moved to the plains and coastal areas of Kerala. In the fourth century A.D, possibly fleeing invasions. In Kerala they became settled agriculturalists, rulers and warriors in a peasant based society and organized into kingdoms, such as the kingdoms of Calicut and Cochin. This region was part of the Hindu system, with religious practices and a caste system somewhat similar to those of the Nepalese Brahmans.

The very interesting kinship traditions of the Nayar take us back to a period ranging from the mid 1300-s and the late 1700-s, before the British conquests India. These traditions were studied by Kathleen Gough, who used historical records to supplement her own field-work among the modern Nayar in the 1940s. By this time many features of the earlier system have changed and matrilineal descent was disintegrating.

In these centuries before the conquest, the people of Kerala were stratified in numerous castes. At the top were Nambuduri Brahmans, themselves subdivided into higher and lower orders, who served as priests and religious leaders over a wide region, collectively operating somewhat like the Catholic Church in medieval Europe. Below them were Nayar rulers, consisting of members of royal matrilineages that ruled kingdoms and below these were chiefdoms controlled by chiefly Nayar matrilineages. Chiefdoms were divided into villages, and in some of these were Nayar village headmen whose matrilineages owned the village land through appointment by chiefs or kings. Below all these were commoner Nayar castes whose members lived in rural areas and it is the kinship traditions of this group will be discussed here?

4-2 Clan and lineage:

Commoner Nayars lived in villages along with people of many other castes. But within villages they lived in their own neighborhoods among fellow caste persons. They were divided into matrilineal clans, which were dispersed among different neighborhoods and villages, sexual relations were forbidden. They were not corporate groups, but members had rights of hospitality in each other's homes. There was one another obligation: all clan members had to be informed of the births or the deaths within the clan. Upon receiving the news, all clan members observed a fifteen-day period of birth or day pollution, during which they maintained restrictions on their behavior and diet.

Clans were subdivided into matrilineages consisted of all those members of one clan who lived in one neighborhood of a village. In any one neighborhood there could be from six to ten different

lineages representing different clans, but all shared the same caste. Neither clans nor lineages had official leaders.

The lineage was not an economic unit, and members did not own property in common. But in several senses it was corporate. For one thing, if a branch of a lineage died out, the other lineage members became heirs to the property.

Lineages were further divided into Property groups, which in turn were fully corporate units. Each property Group included people who were related within a depth of three to six generations and there were as many as eight such units within one lineage. Members of a property group normally lived in a household. All members were matrilineally related and jointly owned property, consisting of land, buildings, and serfs.

Property Groups were headed by the oldest male member, called the *karanavan*. He managed the household and was the legal guardian of all members.

Each of these matrilineal kin categories and groups was named, and a Nayar person would take these names along with a personal name and the title of Nayar.

One other unit was important in the commoner Nayar social system: the neighborhood caste assembly, a grouping of all the *karanavan* of one neighborhood. This unit met occasionally to manage neighborhood temples and to judge violations of religious law or caste law.

4-3 Marriage

The Nayar had one of the most intriguing marriage systems ever found in human societies.

Already we have seen that they practiced Natolocal residence, which is itself quite rare. But also note that their marriages could be polygynous and polyandrous, and that each commoner Nayar female underwent two types of marriages, one known as *sambandan*, a joining together with one or more visiting husbands.

How it worked? Every ten years or so, each lineage gathered together all of its prepubescent females and on one day, in one grand ritual, married them to the males of its special *enangar* (linked lineages). Evidently a village astrologer paired off grooms and young girls according to their horoscopes. The entire village witnessed the event. The marriage ceremony must have been fairly impressive.

Before the ceremony began, each girl, though she had not yet menstruated, underwent a mock first-menstruation ceremony during which she was secluded and other rituals were performed. Later, during the marriage ceremony itself, each groom tied gold tali around the neck of his bride. With this tali, a girl was regarded as having attained the status of a mature woman, ready to bear children and perpetuate her lineage. (Kathleen Gough). The tali was worn until death.

After the tali-tying ceremony each couple was secluded in a room for three days and three nights. On the fourth day the groom departed, and from this day forward, he and the bride did not need to have anything more to do with another. A woman had to fulfill only one obligation to her tali-tying husband, namely upon his death where she has to observe 15 days of death pollution for him.

It was absolutely imperative that the tali-tying marriage has to be performed for a girl before her first menstruation. If a girl was known to have menstruation before this ceremony, she was excommunicated from her caste and the caste assembly forced her Property group to send her away and perform her funeral rituals. Most likely she would have been sent off elsewhere to become a slave.

After the tali-tying marriage the woman was free to have sexual relations with any man she chose, provided that he was of her own caste or of a higher one. The men with whom she had these kinds of relations were considered as her husbands, even though no religious ceremonies marked the establishment of these joining together unions.

There was apparently no limit to the number of joint husbands. Since a Nayar woman could have more than one visiting husband, the society was polyandrous; and since a Nayar man could have a number of separate wives, the society is also polyginous.

Marriages were restricted by a rule of clan exogamy and by a rule that women could not marry men of lower castes. In addition, a woman could not have two or more husbands from the same lineage, idem for the men. The man who performed the tali-tying with a woman could, if he and she wants, become one of her husbands, but this outcome was not necessary. Males could enter joining together unions at any time, whether or not they had ever served as tali-tiers at all.

A. husband visits his wife at night after having dinner in his own household. It was considered impolite to visit a wife for many hours in a day, and too much time spent in the house's spouse may increase the jealousy of the mother's husband. Gough notes that women's regular husbands know each other and informally agree upon their turns. Like wise co wives apparently did not object to sharing visiting husbands.

These arrangements should not be interpreted as reflecting sanctioned casual sex or promiscuity. If it is evident from above, that husbands and wives did not form domestic units and their interaction is reduced to night visits, there is an obligation that visiting husbands had to wives.

When a woman become pregnant, all husbands who might be the father were obliged to acknowledge their paternity by giving gifts of cloth to the woman and, after the birth, paying the expenses of the delivery to the midwife. This was a very serious matter, for if no man made these payments, the father of the child was assumed of low-caste status – in which the woman's male matrilineal relatives could put her and her child to death.

Both the tali-tying and joining together marriages legitimized female reproduction and children. Effectively by the tali-tying marriage the female herself is transformed into a legitimate child bearer for her property group, lineage and caste. The seclusion during the tali ceremony symbolically conferred potential sexual rights in the woman to males of the caste who are outside her lineage and clan.

Upon completion of the tali-tying ceremony, the girl received the title of *amma* (mother). Now the woman is legitimized as a reproducer, her individual children are further legitimized through the visiting husbands' gifts.

Gough describes the Nayar marriage as the slenderest of ties. Neither children nor economic interests, nor common residence, united married couples. Each partner had primary, binding ties with his or her matrilineal kin. The father-child and mother-father relations are not close. However the relation mother –son is strong and also the relation brother-sister. The relation between mother and son was not based only on mutual obligations but also on love. Relations between a male and his mother's brother are formal and distant. As for authority, children quickly learn that it would not come so much from the mother but from her brothers. Males themselves who assume responsibilities in the household, often felt that the strong authority of the mother's brother. Moreover, the authority of males in Property groups, especially that of the karanavan, was ritually acknowledged in household worship

The Nayar were seen by anthropologists to represent a solution which was able to combine matrilineal descent and with authority vested in men. In addition Gough has drawn a connection between Nayar polyandry and the fact that Nayar males, especially young men, were specialized in military service and thus sporadically from their villages for many months at a time. In the context of monogamy this would have meant that an individual woman would be without a husband: an impregnator for long months.

(Kathleen Gough with D.M Schneider, 1961, Matrilineal kinship. Berkeley: University of California Press)

5-DOUBLE DESCENT, BILATERAL AND COGNATIC DESCENT

5-1 Double descent:

A society whose kinship patterns are traced on the basis of double descent contains both matrilineal and patrilineal groups at the same time.

Ego belongs to both corporate descent groups. The key to double descent is that the two descent groups always have quite different functions. The following case study in the Beng form Ivory Coast.

Before French colonization the Beng subsistence had been based on hunting, gathering, and horticulture. The Beng also carried extensive trade with neighboring groups, largely through their production of valued kola nuts.

When the French introduced cash cropping, especially coffee and cocoa, male hunting declined and male labor in agriculture became important.

Politically the Beng are divided in two regions, each with its own queen and king. In both regions there are several villages, each of which is presided over by a male and a female chief. By now, many Beng have converted to Islam and a few to Catholicism.

The Beng recognizes double descent. Both the matri and patrilineal groups are corporate groups, and both subdivided into lineages. The patrilineal groups are strictly exogamous. Aside from this marriage restriction, patrilineal groups are important in a number of ways. It is from one's patrilineal group that one inherits a number of food taboos, or a list of particular foods that one is forbidden to eat. The Beng believe that if a person violates a patrilineal food taboo, he or she will become ill and must seek a healer who is a patrilineal member.

In some ways the matrilineal groups are more prominent than the patrilineal groups in Beng society and culture. Land is inherited matrilineally, from mothers' brothers to sister's sons. Second, political leaders must be members of specific matrilineal groups.

Unlike the patrilineal groups, matrilineal groups are not exogamous. Indeed a preferred form of marriage is one in which a man marries a matrilineal second cousin. –say a MMZZDD. The Beng say an advantage of this form of marriage is that, should a couple quarrel, the matrilineal group members will intervene to put pressure on the couple to resolve their differences. But if the husband and wife come from different matrilineal groups, their respective matrilineal groups will be not so interested in keeping the marriage together.

Marriages are arranged by parents, with both bride and groom having little say in the matter.

Residence is patrilocal. Polygyny is permitted and considered as an ideal by men. Females are supposed to be virgins at the time of marriage.

Double descent among the Beng is interwoven with relationships between the sexes as well as with major religious beliefs and practices concerning men, women, and sexuality. The Beng the two types of descent grouping as complementary and jointly responsible for the social structure.

5-2. Bilateral societies

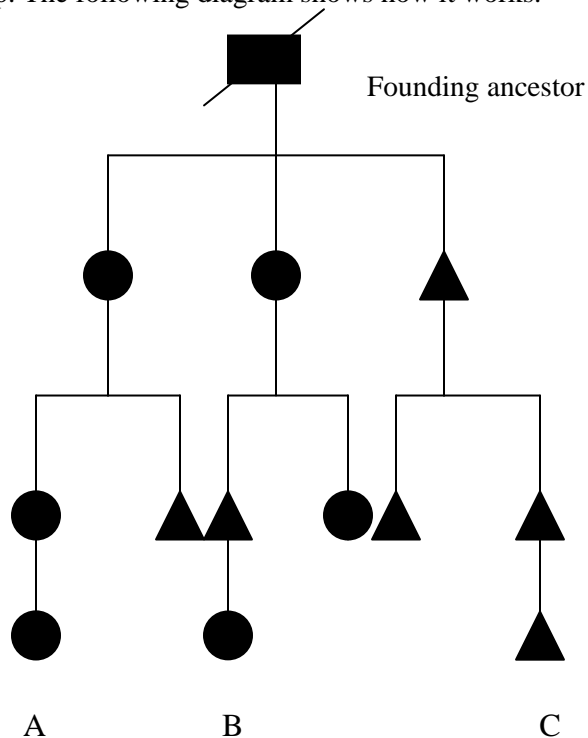
Euro-American societies are bilateral, but there are also many other bilateral groups elsewhere in the world. One example is the Rungus of Malaysia. They cultivate rice, maize and other crops and raise children, pigs, and water buffalos. They live in longhouses, and their post marital residence is normally matrilineal. A husband moves to the bride's house, and bride and groom live with her parents for about an agricultural season. Then the husband builds a separate family apartment attached to the longhouse and the couple resides there. Longhouses may contain anywhere from two to thirty –two separate apartments, each accommodating a married couple along with their children. The longhouse however, is not a corporate group. Rather, it is best seen as an aggregate

of separate nuclear families. Each Rungus village may have between one and five longhouses. Villages can be seen as corporate units. Since they control land-use rights. A person has a right to reside in the village and use its land if he or she was born in the village or married someone there or, failing these connections, can make an application for membership to the headman, which can be accepted or rejected. Once in, each family farms a piece of land separately, using the surplus to acquire other goods from the market.

Inheritance of family property (excluding land, which is not privately owned by families) is essentially bilateral.

5-3 Cognatic descent:

A descent group can be formed through the tracing of an ancestor's descendants through both males and females links. This is a case of cognatic descent, where by both males and females may reproduce the group. The following diagram shows how it works.



Person B is connected to the ancestor through males and females links. There is a difference between double descent and cognatic descent. In double descent two loops enclose ego with his separate matrilineal and patrilineal groups. In the cognatic it is more complex, four loops enclose ego with all of his grand parents: FF, FM, MF, MM. By extension the number of the groups someone can belong to become considerable over the generations.

In fact, cognatic societies do form discrete groups, and they do so simply by using mechanisms over descent to pare down the large groups of all possible members to a smaller group of real and active members. One mechanism is parental residence. For example, a cognatic society could have a rule that all the descendants of an ancestor are potentially members of a group. But in that event whenever two people from two different descent group marry, they must decide with which groups they will live. Their children will then become real members of that group.

Another way in which a cognatic society can get around, or at least reduce, overlaps among memberships in descent groups would be to follow descent group endogamy, or to encourage marriage within the group (for example between cousins).

A feature common to many groups with cognatic descent that they have a built-in patrilineal bias. In other words, the group members may express a strong preference to reside patrilocally, or patrilineal descendants might be given preference to a group's land and resources.

6- Marriage and alliance introduction

Part of these notions have been treated by Professor Srivastava in his lecture. We will illustrate this chapter by an example of polyandry which is quite common in Laddakh, Nepal and Tibet.

6-1 The Nyinba paradox:

(See Levine, Nancy, 1988. *The dynamic of polyandry: kinship, domesticity and population on the Tibetan border*. University of Chicago Press)

The polyandrous Nyinba are a small group of Tibetan people, numbering just over 1300 persons. Their ancestors came from Tibet, but, like the Brahmans, the Nyinba now live in Nepal. Culturally, however, they are very different from Nepalese Brahmans. The Nyinba speak a dialect of Western Tibetan, follow Buddhism, and have their own distinctive way of life based on herding and long-distance trade as well as agriculture.

The Nyinba reside in four villages in the far Norwest of Nepal, a particular remote and rugged region. The environmental factor is important. Since resources are limited and difficult to manage, population expansion would put considerable pressure on these resources, resulting poverty and ecological degradation.

Polyandry can support low population growth, and this partly why the polyandrous Nyinba have been successful in the region and, indeed, why their relatively wealthy villages are impressive. In addition, polyandry is central to a particular domestic economy that the Nyinba have developed and that has helped them sustain relative prosperity.

Many Nyinba males are away from their villages for long period of time, moving all from Tibet to northern India. When in their villages, men also engage in agricultural activities, but the routine tasks of agriculture are largely women's work. Women clear fields, apply compost and manure, weed, and do the husking, drying, winnowing, and storage of grain. The Nyinba highly value male labor, especially trading.

In times past, Nyinba society was divided into slaves and masters. Slaves lived in small houses nearby their masters and performed agricultural and domestic labor. Slavery was abolished in Nepal in 1929, but after emancipation most of the slaves remained in their villages, acquiring land.

There remains a sharp status distinction between the descendants of former slaves and masters. The Nyinba are patrilineal and largely patrilocal. It sometimes happens that parents have a daughter but no sons, and in this case they may bring in a husband to live matrilocally within them and inherit the estate. But this arrangement is not perceived as the ideal. The parents' in-law tend to distrust the incoming husband as an outsider.

The Nyinba are organized in patrilineal exogamous clans.

In slave-times, the slaves themselves were a group apart and had no connection with the patrilineal clans of the master group. Interestingly, whereas the master group was polyandrous and patrilocal, the slaves were monogamous and matrilocal. It was the slaves owners who decided to keep slave women under their control at home. And bring them husbands from other slave households. One result of this arrangement was that slave household became female centered and slave women played a dominant role within them. At the same time, the master group considered monogamy and matrilocality to be signs of slavery inferiority.

Along with patrilineal descent, the Nyinba recognized important relationships traced through women. These are best seen in relation to Nyinba notions of heredity. The Nyinba say that fathers contribute their 'bone' to a child, passing it through sperm, and that mothers contribute "blood". In this way a child has a hereditary link with both, but the link with father is more important in the sense that males are believed to contribute more to a child's character and physical appearance. Also, when a woman produces a child, she passes on something of the bone of her father, which within her has become transformed into blood.

Note too that the children of two sisters are considered closely by blood through their mothers. Being so related the children of sisters, though of different clans, cannot marry.

For Nyinba, an important group is the *trongba*. Trongbas are corporate, landholding households. Each trongba has a special name that, along with a personal name, is used to identify individuals. Trongba members own land, houses, domestic animals, and other property in common. Each trongba has also a shrine to its own gods who protect the household. The shrine consists of arrows (a symbol of male continuity), with one arrow added every year. When a bride moves into a trongba, her hand is tied to the arrows with a thread that remains a part of the shrine.

Sons of the trongba will jointly inherit the estate and are to remain together for life. Ideally, the trongba should not split up or partition its property. But sometimes a trongba grows too large or its members come into conflict, in which a partition can take place. Thus, partition is generally discouraged in a village. The Nyinba prefer to maintain a stable size village, which for them means a stable number of village households. If at times a number of households die out, then village growth by partition of other trongba is needed.

At the core of Nyinba culture, is polyandry. The Nyinba practice fraternal polyandry, the marriage of a set of brothers to one common wife. Virtually all males who have brothers marry polyandrously. All brothers are equally husbands to their wife; they all have sexual and procreative rights to this woman. Even if another brother is born after the marriage of his older brothers, he will, when mature automatically acquire the same rights. Ideally a woman is expected to treat all her husbands equally, without sexually excluding any of them. It is alright if she feels more affection to one over the others so long as she does not deny any brother roughly equal sexual time and equal chance to father her children. The problem of sexual equity is handled by having the wife spend an entire night with one husband at a time and with all husbands in more or less equal measure. When the brothers are quite young, regulation of their sex behavior is regulated by the parents.

Sexual relations are not confined to marriage for either men or women. Indeed, tells us Levine (1988), virtually all women engage in extra marital affairs, most frequently in the early years of their marriage. Men accept this situation, without necessarily approving of it, but if the affair becomes public, the woman's lover can be fined and a man might beat his wife for adultery. There is little that wives can do to prevent or stop the affairs of husbands; a woman may be motivated, however, to try to curtail the adulterous behavior of a favorite among her husbands.

Other forms of marriage are permitted and practiced in Nyinba culture. This true of all polyandrous societies. Among Nyinba monogamy will come naturally if a man has no brother. In fact there is no notion of opposition between marriages as such; marriage is simply perceived as polyandrous. Polygyny, though not common, is also practiced. It is acceptable when a woman is childless. Childless women are pitied, but childlessness by itself is not considered a sufficient reason for divorce.

Conjoint marriage is also a possibility in this society. One or more brothers in a polyandrous union become dissatisfied in their marriage and then seek to bring in another wife. The most obvious reason is the number of brothers involved in the relationship of marriage with a woman. Three to four brothers will undermine the health of a lady or she will have strong difficulties to handle cooking, serving, doing laundry, and finally having sex with all these people.

But in that case of multiples husbands and wives, distinct sub couples will emerge later probably splitting in separate households.

One might suppose that with polyandry there would be little interest among brothers in identifying individual paternity. Interestingly, just the opposite is the case. Nyinba men are very concerned of this. But inevitably there are pregnancies where the father could be any of several husbands.

Women also say that they prefer polyandry because having more security with more than an husband. Wives are primarily responsible for paternity assignments and this gives them some power.

The key to Nyinba polyandry lays in the corporate trongba and its management. The ideal trongba is a large group consisting of brothers and males, spanning a few generations. It is considered best to have only one fertile wife for each set of brothers in each generation, and best for each woman to have sons. Brothers should stay together in strong solidarity and keep the trongba land and other property undivided. The Nyinba pointed out that polyandry supports that. If they had all separate wives, their interests would be divided and the brothers would split.

6-2 Marriage and alliance mechanisms: Exogamy and exchange: Manipulating women?

The use of marriage as a mechanism for alliance between groups may have a brilliant human invention, but arranging a marriage between groups is not an easy task. Getting two kin groups to come together and agree to entrust their members in marriage to each other is another matter. In fact, in-law individuals and groups often mistrust one another. Possibly this is why many societies practice various form of in-law avoidance.

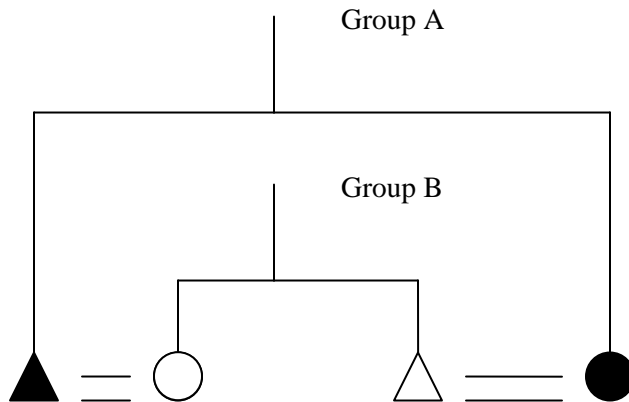
Marriage as alliance between groups returns us to the concept of exogamy versus endogamy. Let us concentrate on descent group exogamy and give attention to a new set of kins: cross and parallel cousins.

Cross cousins are the children of two opposite –sex siblings. Parallel cousins are the children of two same sex siblings. In some societies only one type of cross cousin (FSC or MBC) is permitted as spouse; in others both types are permitted. Cross-cousin marriage does not necessarily mean that ego is marrying a first cousin, or that the people involved are systematically practicing first-cousin marriage. It may be that ego is marrying, say, a second or third cousin, or , for that matter any person who is classified linguistically as a cross cousin.

Exogamy, as we already assumed, help at promoting peaceful relations, or at least prevent groups from forming only hostile relationships.

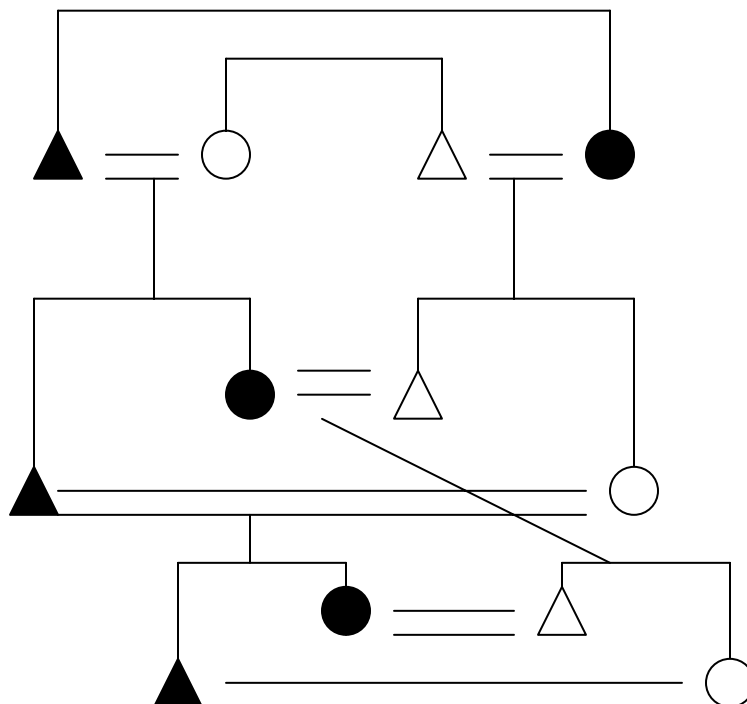
Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1969) took this line of thinking one step further. First, for societies practicing group exogamy, he distinguished between those with complex marriage systems and those with elementary marriage systems. In the former, there is just a rule that one must marry outside the descent group. Most societies that practice descent group exogamy are of this type. In the latter, there is not only a rule of descent group exogamy but also rules specifying whom, or into what groups, one should marry. Levi-Strauss then said early human groups were of this elementary form. These groups were not just marrying out, they were systematically intermarrying with other groups; they exchanged women. By exchanging women over generations, these early groups were essentially settings up forms of enduring and perpetual alliances with one another.

The idealized figure is the following:



Spouse exchange between groups A and B

This exchange may be kept over the generations, such that the children of these first unions intermarry, their children also intermarry. In short, every male ego is marrying a FZD who is also a MBD. Likewise each woman is marrying a MBS who is also a FZS. Thus cross-cousin marriage is a way to maintain the exogamous alliances between A and B during several generations. These types of marriages are no longer common on a world scale, but they have been found, with many variations in different societies. Levi-Strauss interpreted all these versions of spouse exchange among remote hunter-gatherers as evidence of kinds of marriage exchange among early humans.



Systematic
Spouse exchange between
A and B

Others ways of arranging marital exchanges between groups are possible. For example, group A given women gives systematically women to group B which in turn gives to group C , which could give them to groups A in turn. In this type of system, every ego winds up marrying only one type of cross-cousin. A male ego marries his MBD and a female ego marries a FZS. An example of society that practices this form of marriage is the Purum, a tribal group from India.

In primitive societies, in Levi-Strauss scheme, human renounced sexual to their own women in order to trade with another group and so become allies. They bonded together precisely because their items of exchange: live women, were valuable. Thus alliance born between men and thus marriage institutions were created. But according to Levi-Strauss was primarily a relationship involving men and only secondarily a man and a woman.

6-3 What about endogamy?

Now, what about descent group endogamy or, more specifically, endogamy within a unilineal lineage? We presume that few Paleolithic hunter-gatherers groups practiced descent group endogamy; inasmuch as we know that few modern hunter-gatherers are doing so. But descent group endogamy is found in different countries. Arab societies with patrilineal lineages are one example. A man is permitted to marry his parallel cousin, an FBD; a man's marriage to FBD is preferred and is widely practiced though not mandatory. In the case of lineage endogamy, the descent group does not use marriages to maintain alliances with other descent groups, but it procures other advantages. One is that the descent group retains his rights in the reproduction of its female members; it does not need to rely on cooperation with other descent groups to reproduce itself. Another advantage is that, in situations where females as well as males inherit lineage property, this property will stay in the lineage. Otherwise, with lineage exogamy, women at marriage will take property out of the lineage (say, in the form of dowry) . The latter advantage is one of the most frequently mentioned by people practicing this form of endogamy. Along with material property, valued but more abstract assets such as power, prestige and social status can be kept within a group through endogamy.

