

## CHAPTER SIX

*Cognatic Descent and Ego-centred Groups*

I

IN Chapter One, we contrasted the unilineal and cognatic methods of recruitment with respect to the forming of descent groups. The unilineal method, we saw, had the advantage of assigning individuals to one group only (father's or mother's) and so creating discrete, that is non-overlapping groups. We can perhaps visualize this as below:

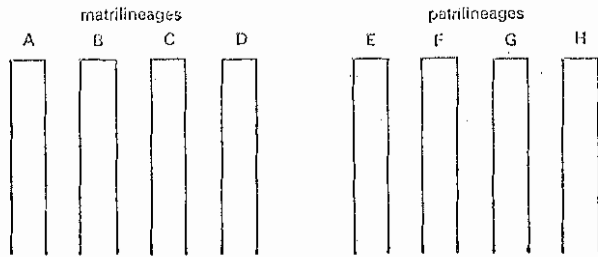


Diagram 28

When both unilineal principles are used, the same remains true and a man is a member of one matrilineage and one patrilineage and these exist for different purposes. Either unilineal system produces a discrete series of descent groups – lineages or clans – and an individual is assigned to one of these only. In a double-descent system, the units of the system are still discrete and non-overlapping patrilineages on the one hand and matrilineages on the other, although there will be members of all the matrilineages in each of the patrilineages and vice versa. As the matrilineages and patrilineages exist for different purposes, this does not mat-

ter, although as we saw for the Yako, it might if not skilfully 'meshed' produce some problems. We might illustrate it as below:

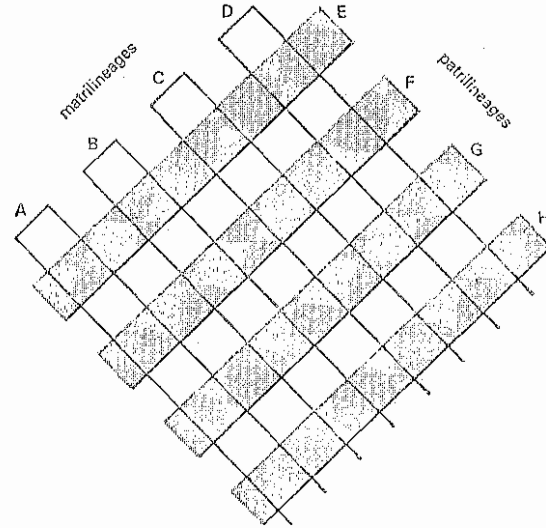


Diagram 29

When we come to cognatic descent groups, however, the picture changes. No longer is the society composed of discrete non-overlapping groups, for as we saw, by their very nature the cognatic lineages are bound to overlap in membership, and a man will be a member of several similar-purpose groups at the same time. Clearly, then, these must present different structural problems from unilineal groups, although, like the latter, they are composed of the descendants of a common ancestor. In the cognatic case, however, this descent is not limited by sex, but *all* the ancestor's descendants are included in his group. It represents the third alternative open to our sibling group: allow both men and women to reproduce the group. We might illustrate it as follows:

unilineal descent groups. They cannot, to take a simple example, ever be residential groups. If one of these lineages decided to keep all its members together, then it could only do so at the expense of other lineages, by depriving them of members. It could keep a core of members together and compete with other lineages for the allegiance of the absent ones – and we have seen that something like this can happen in some matrilineal societies – but there cannot be a rule that all members of the lineage reside together. We cannot, in fact, predict what rules of residence there will be. As these groups are almost bound to be dispersed, then they could go with *any* rule of residence, or more likely with *no* fixed rule. To take another example, they could not act as vengeance groups – a common function of unilineal lineages. If a man of lineage A killed a man of lineage B, in our unilineal examples, then B could revenge itself by killing a member of A. This is easy because the membership of B is quite distinct from that of A. But if a man of 1 killed a man of 2, in our cognatic example, then how could 2 revenge itself on 1 when members of 1 are also members of 2 and vice versa? One could go on adding examples of the problems that overlapping brings in its wake. So devastating have these seemed to some theorists that they have denied that cognatic descent groups could possibly exist and treated them – because Principle 3 holds good here and the men are in charge – as patrilineal groups in a state of flux. We will see why this is later.

## II

Now there is nothing wrong with being a member by birth of several groups. Indeed, it might even have positive advantages. But it does follow that unless they are modified in some way these cognatic descent groups cannot function like unilineal lineages. They share with the latter the characteristic of being groups based on descent from a common ancestor, but in accepting the cognatic mode of recruitment they have lost the discreteness that is the unilineal descent group's trump card in social effectiveness.

But the fact that they cannot function quite like unilineal descent groups should not blind us to their possible functions, and, in some circumstances, they may even have survival value that unilineal groups lack. But let us first say that what we have been discussing above, in an abstract way, are what anthropologists have come to term 'unrestricted' cognatic descent groups; that is, those that admit to membership all the descendants of the founding ancestor. It is possible to restrict membership in such groups on criteria other than sex, and produce groups that can function like their unilineal opposite numbers. But for the moment let us stick to the ruthlessly cognatic version.

We could imagine a situation in which these were ceremonial groups, as is in fact the case with the Sagada Igorots of the Philippines. If group 1 called its members together for a ceremony, then it would be no matter that they were all also members of other groups who had other ceremonies; the only clash would be over *time*: they could not hold different ceremonies at the same time. But another circumstance that is easily imagined might get over this problem. Say, there were in the society several areas of grazing land, and these areas had been owned originally by men who instituted the rule that all their descendants could graze their cattle on them. It would again be no matter that a man had grazing rights on more than one of these – in fact it might be a very good thing. The Igorots mentioned above provide examples of this. Their ancestors entered the territory they now hold about eight to ten generations ago. Some prominent men among these early migrants cleared certain hillsides of trees and *all* the descendants of each man have a right to cultivate on the patch of hillside he cleared. Similarly, clusters of pine trees that were first claimed by a man are the possession of all his descendants who appoint a 'warden' to regulate the gathering of wood. Again, take inheritance. If there were a rule that all a man's children shared in his inheritance, then this would go on being divided down the generations and his heirs could form a cognatic lineage. This 'potential' lineage may never in

*499 + 1000 X lineal love*

fact amount to very much except that links would have to be kept up in the case of the dying out of one branch of it and a consequent 'reversion' of property. This would all depend on the nature of the property. If it were, say, cattle - which could easily be divided and shared - then there would be perhaps less need for the group to stick together; but if the inheritance were impartible - say undividable land - then, of course, the group would have to have some unity in order jointly to exploit it.

This latter point raises the question of residence again. If the property of the group is a territory, how can the group reside in and exploit this territory? Well, we have already suggested a slight modification of the system that will allow for this: a core of members could reside there, while the absent members could retain rights in the land without actually being on it; they could come and live on it if they wanted to. This method could be pushed a little harder. The group could be defined as all the descendants of the ultimate ancestor *who elected to live on the lineage lands*. Those who elected to live elsewhere would lose rights to membership in the lineage. If some such qualification is made, then the group is known as a 'restricted' cognatic descent group. The cognatic principle still holds - all the descendants of the ultimate ancestor have a *right to the land of the group*; but unless they exercise this right, then they lose it. This means that a man must *choose* which lineage to belong to of the many to which he claims a link. In our example (p. 148), then, ego must choose whether to affiliate with 1, 2, 3, or 4, and must, in fact, take only one of these. The result of such a system would be groups as discrete as unilineal descent groups, but instead of achieving this discreteness by restricting recruitment to one or other *sex* of the group, they achieve it by a *restriction on residence*: only those who reside with the group are members of it.

Thus it is that while still holding to the cognatic principle (a man can join *either* father's or mother's group etc.), a series of discrete non-overlapping groups can be formed. The great adaptational advantage that these groups have is

*flexibility*. In a society where, say, patrilineages each live on a limited amount of land, it is likely that demographic pressures can result in some lineages becoming far too large for the amount of land they hold, while in others the ratio of land to members may drop over a few generations. We saw earlier how unilineal descent groups had this *chink* in their armour - they were subject to demographic fluctuations. When this happens, the neatness and precision of the unilineal principle which is fine for recruitment purposes becomes a built-in rigidity which can throw the system off balance. The cognatic system, on the other hand, can deal with this contingency quite easily. If one group threatens to become far too large for its land, then many of its members will be members of other such groups and can take up their land rights in these, thus redistributing the population evenly amongst the holdings. The fact that cognatic descent groups seem most popular in small island communities may be due to this fact - population pressure on a small area of land. The cognatic system here allows for flexibility, while a unilineal system might well break down under demographic strain. In fact, *unilineal systems do exist in small island communities* but they have to be ready to make adjustments in the face of the pressures we have described. This leads some commentators to see the systems we have called 'cognatic lineages' as results of the breakdown of a patrilineal system. In fact, they often have a patrilineal tinge. There is a strain towards keeping men together - fathers, sons and brothers - for purposes of defence and solidarity in work etc. This means that residence is often predominantly patrilocal: of the choices open to him, a man most readily chooses to live with his father's group. Whether we regard this as the result of a breakdown of patriliney - or, as other observers have seen it, as the beginnings of a patrilineal system - depends perhaps on our views of the nature of social evolution and change. My own opinion is that the cognatic lineage method is in all probability an independent type, but that it could in some cases result from unilineal breakdown. It could also rigidify into unilineality in some cases,

depending on whether circumstances led to the adoption of a matrilineal or patrilineal system of residence.

A lot here depends on the ideology of the system. The Mae-Enga of New Guinea have a predominantly patrilineal ideology - they believe in the 'closeness of relationship' of agnates and they have patrilineal clans and lineages etc. But a lineage will allow cognates to farm its lands, when there is not too much pressure on these. Thus, a man will give land to his sister's sons and daughter's sons if they need it. When pressure builds up, however, preference is given to agnates. Now the Maori of New Zealand, on the other hand, have a cognatic ideology. The social unit is the *hapu*, a territorial group, and a man is a *member* of as many *hapu* as he has lineal ancestors who were *members*. But here, *de facto*, he has to reside in only one at a time. This does not mean that he loses rights in the others as he would in a truly restricted system, but that, in effect, he is stuck with the one he chooses first. Now, here most men choose to stay near their fathers and join the father's *hapu*. Also, the Maori are great keepers of genealogies which run to enormous lengths. The more *males* a man has in his genealogy the more prestigious it is, although to trace a link through a female who was a great princess does not disgrace him. All these facts give a strong patrilineal tinge to the *hapu*, but nevertheless, a man may without prejudice join his mother's or grandmother's *hapu* and he does so quite often. In terms then of the situation on the ground, with both the Mae-Enga and the Maori we have groups of cognates who are primarily agnates using a territory and its lands. A statistical survey may well show that composition of local groups is more or less identical between the two societies - yet one is 'patrilineal' and the other 'cognatic'.

It may be argued that the Mae-Enga cognates do not become *members* of the agnatic lineages to which they attach themselves. This is true, but an example we have already discussed may push the argument a little further. The Yako are divided into territorially based patrilines and a man is supposed to reside in and be a member of the patrilin of his

father - by definition it seems. But the Yako leave a loophole. A man may, if he wishes, leave and join the patrilin of his mother's brother. He is adopted by the latter and becomes his mother's brother's 'son' by adoption. (This has an enormous advantage as he is then his mother's brother's heir both matrilineally and patrilineally and he has his cake and eats it at the same time. A considerable proportion of the Yako take advantage of this stratagem.) Thus, in any patrilineage there may be men who are in fact cognates by birth ('sister's sons') but who have been adopted in. In what sense is this system different then from the Maori? The answer lies at the ideological rather than the practical level. What we have in all these cases are land-holding corporations; one can get membership in these (or, at least, some rights) in various ways. In all three cases, the commonest and surest way is by being one's father's child. In the Mae-Enga and the Yako, one can sue for membership in virtue of a cognatic connexion; but amongst the Maori, one has a *right* to membership by virtue of a cognatic connexion. This may seem a small difference, but it is very important.

However, this discussion should make us wary of trying to force systems too rigidly into the categories of 'patrilineal' 'cognatic' and 'matrilineal'. Some 'patrilineal' systems may in fact be much more like some 'cognatic' than they are like other patrilineal systems. We must always look carefully at all the rights and obligations that people can hold in property, group membership and in each other, and see how these are distributed. Very often, the lines of division become blurred when this is done, but at least we escape the fallacy that having said of a system that it is 'patrilineal' we have disposed of the most important question about it. We have, in fact, only just begun. All systems are in a sense 'transitional'; change is the law of life in society, as well as in nature. If a system is faced with changing circumstances, then it either changes and adapts to these, or dies. Thus, some cognatic systems as we see them operating may be the result of adaptational changes by patrilineal systems, but the opposite may be equally true. This sobering fact should

perhaps turn us from asking simply, 'into what structural category should we place system X', to asking, 'what are the trends in system X; from where is it coming and where does it seem to be going?'

### III

We have seen, then, that cognatic descent groups can be of three kinds:

1. *Unrestricted*. In these, all the descendants of the ultimate or founding ancestor are members.
2. *Restricted*. In these, all the descendants of the founder have a right to membership, but can only exercise this right if they choose, say, to live in the founder's territory.
3. What we might call *pragmatically restricted*. In these all the descendants remain members, but in practice they cannot take up membership in all the groups they belong to, as these are territorial. So they have to choose which one to affiliate with, but this is not immutable.

The important thing here is that the restricted variety can, in fact, function with the same effectiveness as unilineal descent groups, and also have an added flexibility that might turn out in some circumstances to be a positive advantage. Let us look at some examples of these kinds of groups in action in order to see just what they can do. We have discussed the third type under the Maori, so we can leave that aside for the moment.

Let us turn to the Gilbert Islanders in the Pacific to see an elaborate cognatic system at work. The Gilbert Islanders have several kinds of kinship group but we will concern ourselves with their cognatic descent groups. The most all-inclusive of these is an unrestricted cognatic descent group known charmingly as the *oo*. Both men and women hold land and on the death of an individual his land is divided between all his children. (His daughters may have received their share on marriage.) As this process continues, a tract of land is divided and subdivided amongst the descendants of

the original owner. The *oo* regards itself as in a sense jointly responsible for all the land, and members of the *oo* may not sell land without the permission of all the others. If any line of the *oo* dies out, then the land reverts to the *oo* generally and is redistributed among the members. Members who leave the area in which the descent group owns land, do not thereby lose rights in it. Any one who is descended from the original owner keeps his rights in the land and passes these on to his children. The fact that the *oo* are bound to overlap means that an individual may hold rights in several of them. In such a system the various plots of land that an individual holds in the various *oo* territories must not be too far from each other or he could not work them. On small islands, such a system of landholding is feasible. The Maori *hapu*, on the other hand, were not so compact, and so multiple inheritance was relatively impossible.

Another important descent group on the Gilbert Islands is the *bwoti*. This is a segment of an *oo* which is concerned with seating-rights in the community meeting-houses. These rights are very important to the Gilbertese. Each meeting house is marked out, and certain areas of it belong to the descendants of men who owned particular plots of land. Now *all* the descendants of one of these men would be an *oo*, but not all would have inherited a piece of his land. When a man died his land would be divided amongst his children, and he would bequeath the land in one of his *oo* to one child, that in another *oo* to another child . . . and so on. Thus a child might be a member of an *oo* but not necessarily have inherited any of its property; hence he would not be able to sit with the *bwoti* associated with the *oo*. He would, however, have got some land in at least one *oo* that had *bwoti* rights in one of the meeting houses. A person would so distribute his property to his heirs that each of them obtained such a right. The division of inheritance is such that men get much more than women, and in consequence a man is more likely to get *bwoti* membership from his father than his mother. This gives the *bwoti* a patrilineal tinge. Early writers often described it as a patrilineage.

The *bwoti* is then a common descent group whose membership is restricted to those descendants of a common ancestor who have acquired rights in a particular plot of land.

Thirdly, the Gilbertese have the *kainga*. Now, every ancestor who founds a *bwoti*, also founds a *kainga*, but the membership rules are different, so that although each *kainga* is associated with a *bwoti*, their membership is not co-terminous. The rule for *kainga* membership is again hitched to landholding. The original ancestor had lived on a certain tract of land. Some of his descendants continued to reside there but others moved away. Those who continued to reside there *plus* those who had been born and raised there but had moved away after marriage, formed the *kainga*. Thus, those who were born on the land inherited membership even if they moved away; but if they moved away their *children* did not inherit membership. Thus, if a man's parents were living patrilocally he would belong to his father's *kainga*: if they were living matrilocally he would belong to his mother's. It was thus in a sense *parental* residence choice that determined an individual's *kainga* membership. Since residence was predominantly patrilocal most people belonged to the father's *kainga*. Leadership of the *kainga* was passed on patrilineally. This was worked by having the eligible successor reside patrilocally so that his son would be eligible to succeed him and so on. Thus, the *kainga* very much resembled a patrilineage, but this resemblance was arrived at by a route far different from the simple rule of patrilineal succession.

Goddenough, who describes this system sums it up thus: '... all three descent groups are somehow connected with land. An ancestor having established ownership of a tract was the founder of all three. All of his descendants formed an *oo*. Those in actual possession of a share in the land are eligible to membership in a *bwoti*. Those whose parents resided on it form a *kainga*.' Thus the *oo* is concerned with *rights* in the land; the *bwoti* with actual *possession* of a piece of it; and the *kainga* with *residence* on it.

Similar groups to these three – particularly the *oo* and the

*bwoti* – are found in the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Polynesia generally and, of course, New Zealand. The Scottish 'clan' was a form of cognatic descent group, *clann* in Gaelic simply meaning 'children' or descendants. Because of a preference for endogamy and patrilocal residence it, too, had a strong patrilineal tinge as is evidenced in the inheritance of surnames. But note that every true Highland Scot bears two names: his father's and his mother's. Thus Robert McAlpine McKinnon is a McKinnon through his father and a McAlpine through his mother – and he may belong to other clans 'by birth'. This system no longer functions except for sentimental reasons, but in some of the more remote Celtic parts of the British Isles, a descent group like the *oo*, with very similar functions, is still in existence. It would be described with the old Gaelic word too – as 'Clann Eoghain' for example: the children or descendants of Owen, over as many as eight or more generations.

At this point, the reader might like to refer back to Chapter three and look at case 5. In discussing the possible environmental pressures that might produce various kinds of grouping, I suggested that 'transferability of skills' in males, and the need to distribute a population over agricultural plots might lead to a situation in which either the men or the women moved on marriage, thus creating ambilocal residence. In the examples we have just looked at, we can see how this has happened in a number of cases. The residential group that we would get in case 5 would be the core of the Gilbertese *kainga* (with the spouses of members). If those members who were born there and subsequently moved away on marriage continued to have rights in the land of the group, then a true *kainga* could easily come into being. Such a combination of groups that we get in the Gilberts and elsewhere on small islands, however, are very tied to plots of land and localities. This is fine for small islands, but clearly it would be of little use to desert nomads or expanding warrior tribes. For these, a patrilineal system has obvious advantages and such a system of groups as we find

on the Gilberts would not be workable. They represent a rather fine adjustment to ecological pressures: an exploitation of our third option which human biology offers for the recruitment of groups on a kinship basis.

Before leaving cognatic descent groups, we should perhaps look at one for which case 5 in Chapter three can serve as the exact model. The Iban of Borneo live in 'longhouses' and each longhouse may contain anything up to 50 families each living in its own apartment. These families, known as *bilek* after the name of the apartment, are the real units of the society, rather than the longhouse as such. When a couple marry, they must decide whether to live in the *bilek* of the man or that of the woman. This is a momentous choice, because they become members of the one they live in and lose membership in the one they turn down. If a man chooses to go to his wife's *bilek* and farm the land that it owns (part of the longhouse land), then he loses all rights to the land of his natal *bilek* and is thoroughly incorporated into his wife's. (The *bilek* family is exogamous.) A *bilek* family consists, then, of all the descendants of the original owner of the apartment, except those that have moved away and their children, but includes the spouses of natal members who continue to reside in it. Here an individual does not choose whether or not to live in the mother's or father's group, but in the natal group (whether this be mother's or father's), or the spouse's group. It is a kind of cognatic version of the Chinese practice of incorporating the wife of a man into his lineage. It is interesting because virilocal and uxorilocal residence are equally balanced in Iban society, and it therefore gives us an example of cognatic recruitment which is not predominantly patrilocal. The Iban are rice farmers, and one rice farm is very much like another, so labour and skills are easily transferable. A couple on marriage therefore must judge which is the best bet - his *bilek* or hers.

Thus, we can see that out of a situation such as we envisaged in case 5, a number of possibilities could emerge. Predominantly patrilocal residence and continuing rights in the land on the part of those who left would lead to a Gilbertian

situation, while a more rigidly residential rule of membership would give us something like the *bilek* of the Iban. That such groups as the *oo* and the *kainga* seem confined to small islands is perhaps significant, but we should not lose sight of the Maori - a numerous, sophisticated and warlike people - who show that a cognatic principle of descent-group formation need not be confined to atolls.

I have approached the problem of cognatic descent groups backwards in comparison with the approach used for unilineal groups. With the latter, I tried to show how the principle of unilineal descent-group organization could arise out of a simple residence situation: in the present case I started with the principle of group organization and ended with a rather tame reference to residence. The main reason for this was that I wanted to align these groups firmly with unilineal groups in the common category of *descent* groups. Hence, I started by exploring the possibility of having all the descendants of an ancestor as members of his group. This gives us a continuum: at one end we have the unrestricted cognatic descent group in which all the descendants of the ancestor are members; then we have cognatic descent groups restricted in membership in terms of residence; then we have descent groups restricted in terms of sex - that is, only allowing the members of one sex to recruit the group. Thus unilineal groups are seen simply as one type of restricted descent group rather than as a completely separate type of group altogether from the cognatic. All these groups share in being common-descent groups - their focal point is an ancestor from whom all the members ultimately trace descent.

The second reason that I approached this problem backwards was because I am less sure of the connexion between residence and descent in this case. As we saw earlier, the cognatic descent group seems to be compatible with any kind of residence principle - it really depends on what the purpose of the group is. Where, as is usually the case, it is concerned with the inheritance and control of land, then perhaps we can more easily see that residence on the land might have something to do with it. The circumstances that

favour the development of ambilocal residence (case 5) might well favour the growth of cognatic descent groups. Given the transferability of skills and a subsistence-agriculture economy with a pressure on land, then a system of cognatic descent groups would provide a reasonable solution in that it allowed for a redistribution of population amongst the scarce plots. A system like the Gilbertese is an admirable answer to the problem. The unrestricted descent group operates in relation to *claims* on the founder's plot, while the restricted descent groups operate with respect to the actual ownership of parts of it, or residence on it. Such a system can have its problems of course, not least that of fragmentation, and the product may be small, scattered holdings which are uneconomical and difficult to farm.

If residence is ambilocal, and the areas of land concerned are distinct, then the members and their children who leave can either retain rights in the land or lose them, thus producing unrestricted or restricted descent groups. If, however, the people live in large settlements and not on their land, and residence rules are flexible, how then do such groups arise? The full set of determinants for these groups has not yet been worked out, and it may be that an independent ideology of the equal rights of all children to inheritance is involved. But it is hard to believe that the ideology would survive in the face of environmental pressures that made it non-adaptational. Ideological factors cannot be ruled out, however, because it is possible – with suitable adjustments – for unilineal systems to survive in much the same circumstances as seem to breed cognatic systems. Ecology sometimes sets hard and fast limits, but very often it allows a large amount of 'play', and so different systems can flourish in the same conditions. But we must not forget the theorists who insist that cognatic systems are breakdowns of unilineal systems in the face of environmental pressures. Thus they may represent an adjustment of a unilineal system. Alternatively they may simply be the breeding ground of unilineal systems. On this subject, we have a long way yet to go.

My reason for wanting to put these cognatic groups firmly into the category of 'descent groups' is largely due to the fact that anthropologists have tended to ignore them until recently. Most students of kinship, following Radcliffe-Brown, have been bemused by the hard, clean beauty of the unilineal principle and have seen in such things as the *hapu* only sports and oddities. They have either tried to assimilate them to unilineal systems, or have just ignored their existence. Thus, the 'descent-group theory' that gets much talked about really means 'unilineal descent-group theory'. Radcliffe-Brown thought the advantages of the unilineal solutions to be so obvious that he could hardly imagine how any society could get by without adopting one or the other of them. Quite a number, however, have managed to stagger along despite this handicap, and we are now becoming better equipped to see why and how.

There has also been another confusion. Anthropologists have thought that the cognatic principle could not be effectively used to form *descent groups* – those based on descent from a common ancestor – and have thought that it was solely concerned with the formation of *ego-centred* or *personal* groups. It is to these that we must now turn.

#### IV

Descent groups have certain characteristics in common whatever their form. They all consist of the descendants of a common ancestor; all the members are therefore related to each other in respect of such descent. They are usually 'corporate' groups, that is, groups that exist independently of the individuals composing them. They exist 'in perpetuity'; individual members come and go, but the group goes on. Corporateness also implies that they act 'as a body'; thus if one of their members kills a man, the group as a whole is held responsible for the killing; or, as is often the case with land, this cannot be alienated by an individual member but belongs to the group as a whole and must only pass from one member of the group to another. Descent groups are not always corporate in this latter sense, but they always are groups



that exist in perpetuity. They are commonly exogamous, but this is not universally the case. It is the relation by common descent of all the members to each other, and corporateness in the sense of perpetuity of existence that characterizes all descent groups. Bearing this in mind, we can now look at ego-centricity.

We saw earlier that there were two ways of looking at any kinship system: from the angle of the kin-groups composing the society and from the angle of the individual and his kin. Thus, we saw that looked at from the first angle we may only see a society composed of patrilineals; but that in such a society an individual may recognize cognates up to a certain degree as relatives, and have important relationships with matrilineal relatives . . . and so on. Now, this is true of all kinship systems. Goodenough has christened these two angles the *ancestor-focus* and the *ego-focus*. Now, while all kinship systems can be viewed from either focus, only some make use of the ancestor-focus in the formation of groups – descent groups; others make use of the ego-focus in group formation and it is this formation of groups on the basis of the ego-focus that we must now look at. Let us note that these are not mutually exclusive methods, and a society can have more than one kind of kinship group operating in it.

Groups formed on the ego-focus must, of necessity, be very different from those based on the ancestor-focus. They consist not necessarily of people who have an ancestor in common, but of people who have a *relative* (ego) in common who is not an ancestor of theirs. The best known of such groups is the *kindred*. This is recruited on the basis of the degree of relationship of its members to a common ego rather than a common ancestor. The best way to illustrate this is by the familiar English notion of cousinship. Thus, all ego's cognates up to, say, second cousins, could be counted as his kindred. Diagram 32 illustrates this by using the neutral square to mean 'person(s) of either sex' – which stresses the cognatic nature of the group. But it is very different from a cognatic descent group. The men born of the kindred are not all related to each other whereas they are all related to ego.

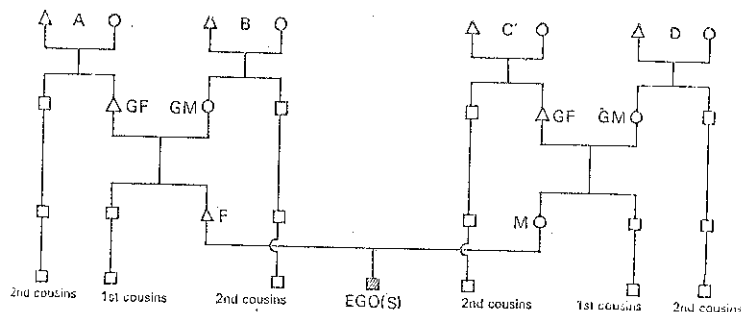


Diagram 32

All the members of it do not have an ancestor in common; all they have in common is ego himself (or herself). Thus, every person in the society has such a group, and each group is relative to that person. No two people except siblings will have the same kindred, and kindreds will thus endlessly overlap. We can illustrate this as below:

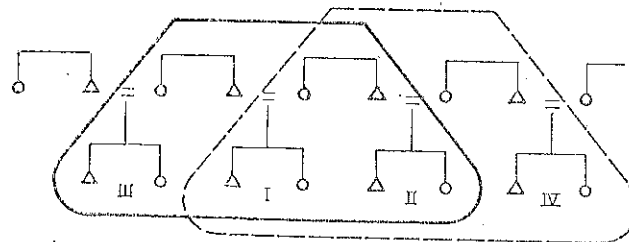


Diagram 33

(solid line = I's kindred; dotted line = II's kindred)  
Here we have a simple kindred of first-cousin range. II and III are members of I's kindred; I and IV are members of II's kindred; but IV is not a member of I's kindred . . . and so on. If we carry the analysis lineally – over the generations – then we would find that ego's kindred was different from the kindred of his father, and that of his mother. Such groups clearly then cannot function except in relation to the ego who is their focus. They cannot be 'corporate' in

the sense of existing in perpetuity, because once ego dies (and here siblings are counted as a collective ego), the group ceases to exist. This is not true of a descent group. Nor do ego's children inherit his kindred. The kindred then is a purely *personal* group.

It is easy to see that such a group cannot perform the same functions as a descent group. It cannot be a landholding corporation passing on land to its descendants. It cannot be in any sense a 'constituent' unit of the society, because it comes in and out of existence as its focal egos are born and die. What does it do then and how does it work? Well clearly it would be a useful group to have in societies where people operate independently, but need on occasion to call in help for some purposes. The Iban, for example, have made the *bilek* family their domestic and economic unit. They lack any form of descent group that is more inclusive than the *bilek*, and the longhouse is not a corporate unit. But the Iban put out quite spectacular raiding and trading parties of considerable size. These are recruited by means of the kindred principle. The Iban surround ego with a kindred of up to second cousin range. Thus each Iban has a body of people – all those related to him up to the degree of second cousin – on whom he can call for some services to himself and who have some obligations to him. He himself of course is a member of several such kindreds – those of his first and second cousins. Now when an Iban wants to take out a head-hunting party, he calls on the members of his kindred. They in turn can call on the members of their kindreds who are not members of the original ego's kindred, who in turn can call on the members of their kindreds . . . and so on until the requisite number of men are mustered. Thus, in our diagram 33, (assuming that these are second-cousin range kindreds rather than first) I would call on II and III; II would call upon IV, who would in turn call on his kindred mates other than II . . . and so on. This body would then go on the hunt and share the spoils between them.

It is also possible to make ego's kin in some degree res-

possible for him. Thus, in the payment of blood money, it could well be the kindred that was the operative unit rather than the clan or lineage. If a man killed another, then all his kindred would have to pay out blood money to the kindred of the dead man who would share it between them. Amongst the ancient Teutons this is supposed to have been the case, with the nearest kin to the murderer paying most, and the nearest kin of the dead man receiving most. In some systems (England under King Alfred for example), the patrilineal relatives paid and received more than the matrilineal. The kindred here was known as the *sib* – a word that has been wrongly appropriated by some writers for application to unilineal descent groups. Amongst the Teutonic peoples, the *sib* was the exogamic unit, and this method of fixing the degree within which marriage was forbidden was adopted by the Christian church.

The kindred could also be used for purposes of inheritance, even if it could not be a property-owning group itself. Thus, if a man died without heirs, his land could revert to his kindred for distribution amongst its members – perhaps again on the basis of 'nearness'.

The essence of the kindred then is that all ego's cognates up to a certain degree are recognized as having some duties towards him and some claims on him. It is perhaps wrong to call this a 'group' at all, but rather should we call it a 'category' of persons. It is never a residential unit nor is it corporate, and it only comes to life, as it were, when the purpose for which it exists arises – like headhunting or the payment of blood money, or the regulation of marriage. (In the latter case it need not exist as a group at all. All ego need know is that he must not marry within a certain degree of relationship.) It is, then, a category out of which a group can be recruited by ego for some purposes.

If we look back to the Gilbert Islanders, we will find that among their kin-groups they have, in addition to the *oo*, *bwoti* and *kainga*, a kindred called the *utu*. Their Malayo-Polynesian relatives in the Northern Philippines whom we have mentioned as having cognatic descent groups, also

combine these with personal kindreds of third-cousin range. The descent groups regulate ceremony and the use of land sites; the kindreds deal with homicide payments and regulate exogamy. They also come to the aid of an individual in trouble, but because of the overlapping of kindreds, this is only really effective if the trouble is between two people so distantly related that their kindreds do not overlap. Clearly, if the two kindreds do overlap then some members will have divided loyalties as they will be equally members of the kindreds of the two combatants. This, in fact, can be quite effective as these 'overlap' members will then make strenuous efforts to bring about a settlement. There are many other examples of the co-existence of descent groups and kindreds, each serving different social purposes. Kindreds can and do co-exist quite easily with unilineal descent groups too, but we do not need elaborate examples of this to see how it could work. I must again stress that the kindred is not really a *group* in the sociological sense. The fact that amongst the patrilineal Zulu a man may not marry any woman descended from his great-grandparents established that each Zulu has an exogamous kindred of second-cousin range. But that is all. Nothing else follows from this, and the kindred has no other functions.

We should perhaps clear up one point that has caused some confusion. One way that the kindred was reckoned amongst the Teutons, and one way that it can always be calculated is in terms of *stocks*. Now a stock is all the descendants of a person or of a married pair. Thus, a kindred of second-cousin range such as we have drawn on diagram 32, will consist of four stocks - the descendants of ego's four pairs of great-grandparents. (A, B, C, and D on our diagram.) A kindred of third-cousin range, such as that of the northern Philippines, would consist of eight stocks . . . and so on. Now, the trouble with the definition of the stock is that it is the same as the definition of cognatic lineage, and this causes confusion. Some writers have called the 'stocks' of the Teutonic sib 'non-unilinear descent groups' for example. The reader should be able to see what the confusion

is here. The essential difference is of course that the cognatic lineage, in common with other descent groups, is founded at a point in time and persists over time from then on; the stock of a kindred exists only in relation to a particular ego and it disappears when he dies. If a member of a cognatic lineage dies, the lineage still continues; when the focal ego of a kindred dies, then the stocks are no more. The lineage then is defined relative to an ancestor who remains a fixed point of reference; the stocks of a kindred are defined relative to an ego. The stocks of a kindred then are, like cognatic lineages, *all* the descendants of a person (or couple); but unlike cognatic lineages they are not independent entities, but only part of the circle of kin around an ego. Thus a cognatic lineage is a stock, but a stock is not necessarily a cognatic lineage, and when it is simply a constituent of a kindred it is really nothing like such a lineage.

## v

We have concentrated above on the *cognatic* kindred. Indeed I have not yet bothered to mention that there is any other form. I wanted to deal with this form of the kindred first, because of the confusion that has arisen in anthropology from dividing the world into societies with unilineal kinship and those with cognatic, and assuming that the only form of kinship organization compatible with the latter was the personal cognatic kindred. We have seen that what matters is not so much the division into unilineal and cognatic, as the difference between the *ego-focus* on the one hand with its personal 'groups', and the *ancestor-focus* on the other with its descent groups. We can clinch this by showing that other forms of personal kindred exist than the cognatic - forms which employ a unilineal principle in recruitment, if we use *unilineal* as synonymous with 'unisexual'.

The kindred can be broadly defined as 'ego's relatives up to a certain fixed degree'. What matters is how this 'degree' is defined. It need not be defined cognatically (or 'bilaterally' as it is usually called in the literature). The Kalmuk

bilaterally - the main function of the kindred is to maintain the ego's stock.



2. That both kinds of group can recruit either cognatically or unisexually.

3. That these modes of grouping are not mutually exclusive and can co-exist in one society serving different purposes.

The fact that two otherwise different systems both use, say, the cognatic principle of recruitment, is important and makes it worth comparing them. But it should not lead us to lump them together on this one criterion. To help clarify this point I offer diagram 35. Here the intersection of two factors – focus, and mode of recruitment – gives us our types of grouping.

Recruitment	Focus	
	ego	ancestor
Unrestricted	cognatic kindred	unrestricted cognatic lineage
Restricted by sex	'unilateral' kindred	unilineal lineage
	other	restricted cognatic lineage

Diagram 35

The blank cell could be filled by an example of an ego-centred group restricted on the basis of residence with ego, although I know of none at the moment.

Obviously the system of cognatic kindreds rings a bell for most readers as it resembles our own kinship system which is however, unformalized and lacks named kindreds. We simply recognize that relatives on both 'sides' of the family are our kin, and we may interact with these, invite them to ceremonies etc. Unless the personal kin-group is formalized in some way, it is perhaps better to speak simply

of ego's kinship *network*, and to spell out its form and functions.

Our own system is primarily concerned with the nuclear family as its basic unit, and continuity over time is not of great importance. At ego's marriage two families are linked – his own and his wife's. The family he is born into is sometimes called by sociologists his 'family of orientation', (a barbarous usage – 'disorientation' might be more appropriate in many cases). The family he forms at marriage is his 'family of procreation' (very ambiguous but now accepted). Thus, our 'kindred' consists of linked nuclear families – ego's family of orientation, his family of procreation, his wife's family of orientation, the families of procreation of his siblings and children, and so on.

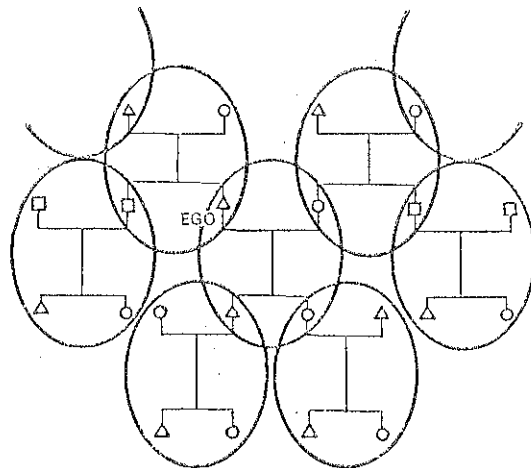


Diagram 36

The limit of recognition of 'nuclear-family' linkage tends to be narrow. This system is more reminiscent of the Shoshone or some Eskimo than of the more elaborate systems we have been discussing here. Cognatic descent groups can form on an *ad hoc* basis if property is involved, but there is not, above

the level of the family, any extended kinship group to which people must belong. If such groups arise, it is to meet specific eventualities; they are not constituent units of the social structure with legal status.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Exogamy and Direct Exchange*

#### I

AFTER the uphill struggle of the last chapter it will perhaps be refreshing to turn back to the fundamental topic of exogamy; a topic we have been taking for granted up to now. We saw in Chapter two how prohibitions on incest automatically produced exogamy – because of the association of sex and marriage – but that the reverse was not necessarily true. In consequence, we could not accept that all exogamic regulations were simply ‘extensions’ of incest prohibitions. We saw in the subsequent chapters how exogamy presented a problem to those descent groups that practised it, because it made them look outside themselves for brides, and so forced them into relationships with other descent groups.

Now ‘forced’ here is simply a figurative way of speaking about the situation, and it may be misleading. Why should the descent groups not actively *want* to marry women other than their own? In many cases they will not think too consciously about it; the rule of exogamy, whether it applies to lineage or clan or both, is, like the incest taboo, a part of cultural inheritance. But, unlike the incest taboo, its benefits are more obvious to the people practising it, and they can often verbalize these quite cogently. It may here be the case that the continuing benefits of the rule may in fact be closely connected with its origin – which was not the case with the incest taboo. Like a good preacher, I will offer you a text for my sermon on exogamy:

‘Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.’ (Genesis 34:16.)

I am not original in offering this text; the anthropologist