

5.3.0. KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY IN A LINGUISTIC SETTING: A CASE STUDY

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5.3.1. INTRODUCTION

During the last 20 years, the study of kinship terminology has been one of the most contentious and provocative fields of anthropological inquiry.¹ Controversies framed about the questions of what, ontologically, kinship terminologies are and how one should study them, have led interested scholars to examine closely the epistemological assumptions of themselves and their opponents - an exercise that cannot but have salutary effects on the quality of general theoretical discourse. Though far from conclusive, the exchanges should be followed carefully, for they aspire to understand fundamental - and as yet unresolved - issues of human behaviour and cultural coding. Despite, however, their anthropological and linguistic importance, these trends have had curiously little traffic with New Guinea scholarship, the latter being commonly neither a data source for general theories nor a testing ground for hypotheses derived from such theories. With a few notable exceptions (Leach 1958; Pospisil 1960; Lounsbury 1965; Elmberg 1968; Schwimmer 1970; Scheffler 1971; Korn 1971; Forge 1971) New Guinea kinship terminologies have not received the sort of theoretical treatment given to systems recorded for the cultures of South and South-East Asia, Australia, and the Americas.²

In this chapter I shall consider sibling terms among the Ilahita Arapesh (East Sepik Province, New Guinea), in a manner demonstrating the utility of certain conceptual constructs which have emerged from the theoretical dialogues.³ The mandate for my approach is contained in Scheffler's observation: 'The real problem is not what kinship terms mean but the nature of the relations among the genealogical designata and significata of certain words and between those designata and any other designata those words may have' (Scheffler 1972:311). Adoption

of Scheffler's view requires acceptance (at least *pro tem*) of the notion that kinterm polysemy is a product of semantic extensions from a focal kintype (Scheffler 1972:313ff.). Acknowledging the complex theoretical issues involved here, I shall say only that my empirical understanding of Arapesh sibling-term semantics conforms to the extensionist perspective, and I shall therefore apply it in this chapter without providing elaborate justification for doing so.

To anticipate the discussion slightly, it will be seen that Arapesh sibling terms subsume three reference fields. The first of these contains the focal kintypes and the range of denotata derived from these foci; connotative features present in this semantic field are then extended metaphorically to become the criterial bases for sibling-term attribution in the second and third fields, consisting of descent and ritual divisions, respectively. (For convenience I shall hereafter call these fields 'categories', not to be confused with the technical sense in which this word is sometimes used by kinship theorists.) The use of slightly different - though etymologically related - terms to designate these categories enables the speaker to indicate which of the alternative sets of meanings is intended, thereby disambiguating the root expression. However, this feature raises the problem of whether we are justified in maintaining the extensionist perspective when these so-called 'extensions' are marked by linguistic alternations. After examining the morphology of these terms, it will be argued that this feature poses no obstacle to the present analysis.

In concluding these preliminary remarks, I should note that the ethnographic relevance of what follows is potentially twofold. First, the widespread (though usually unanalysed) occurrence of kinterm metaphors in the New Guinea literature, with respect to jural and ritual phenomena, suggests that the conclusions reached here may have application elsewhere in the region. Second, the nature of metaphor in these societies has scarcely been explored (*vide* Ryan 1958; Strathern 1970, n.d.; Wagner 1972), and thus, to paraphrase Whitehead, there seems a need for studies which, however slightly, might obscure the vast darkness of the subject.

5.3.2. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The Ilahita Arapesh number about 5,000 persons and occupy a territory of 60 square miles in the western Maprik District, East Sepik Province. Their country is the rolling lower foothills of the Torricelli Mountains, a dissected plain which flattens as it slopes south to the Sepik River. The Ilahita speak a dialect of the Southern Arapesh language (Laycock 1973), and are culturally distinguishable from other dialect-groups

living northwards in the higher foothills of the mountains. Ilahita distinctiveness is largely a product of prolonged and intense contact with the Abelam (to the east and south-east) and the Kwanga (to the south), fierce Middle Sepik groups who have pushed north from the river in a predatory expansion continuing until European contact (Forge 1966: 24). On various evidences, it appears that Middle Sepik influences transformed, intensified, and/or added to certain important elements of aboriginal Ilahita culture. Thus, numerous dispersed hamlets were consolidated into seven large, sedentary villages;⁴ garden technology was improved and intensified, with horticultural and prestige-striving activities centering on the yam (Tuzin 1972); inter-village warfare expanded in scale and significance, and, under conditions of land scarcity resulting from Middle Sepik encroachment, territorial conquest was the objective; finally, upon an age-old initiation structure was superimposed a secret male cult glorifying war and male prowess and promoting astounding artistic and architectural achievements (*vide* Tuzin 1973).⁵

A preliminary note regarding social organisation. The Ilahita subscribe to a patrilineal ideology, with internally segmented totemic clans and a normative preference for patri-virilocal residence. In common with most other New Guinea societies, the 'rules' of descent-group membership admit a high degree of optation (cf. de Lepervanche 1967-68; Kaberry 1967): adoption is frequent and jurally unencumbered; genealogies are shallow, with the result that descendants of co-residing non-agnates achieve full rights of membership within a couple of generations (cf. Barnes 1962); and, also, strong filiative ties with maternal and affinal kin yield residual rights and obligations that can be utilised in membership transfers. Invocation of these non-agnatic kin ties is relatively easy, due to the high rate of local endogamy - reaching over 90 percent at the village level.

The village itself is divided into named, semi-autonomous wards, which are themselves divided into residential precincts or hamlets. Descent groups - clans and their subunits - are domiciled in several of these hamlets within a particular ward, with elements from two or three clans occasionally occupying different portions of a single hamlet.

Before looking at sibling terms in detail, it seems advisable to place them in the context of the general terminological system, its features and modes of usage.

5.3.3. KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

The Ilahita Arapesh use vernacular kinterms almost exclusively in reference contexts.⁶ In nearly two years of fieldwork, a vernacular kinterm was heard used in address only once: when the encounter with *Alter* was potentially hostile, and it was momentarily in *Ego's* interests to avoid trouble by invoking a remote, untraceable kinship link.⁷ Though other similar instances probably occurred (unobserved) during this period, there can be little doubt that it is an exceptional and context-bound usage. Apart from these, the only vernacular recognition- or address-terms are in the infant lexicon. Thus, an infant addresses the primary care-giving female as *mama*. Later on, recognition of the adult male most frequently associated with this female is signalled with the utterance *papa* or (as adult informants insist it should be rendered) *hapaapa'*. From about age four the child regularly addresses these individuals (and everyone else besides) by their proper names. Thereafter, and for the rest of his life, *Ego* maintains this usage, reverting to the infantile forms only in moments of (non-directed) extreme negative affect (fear, pain, despair, grief), and occasionally to express dependency in the supplication of parental ghosts.

Non-systematic observations of general language acquisition in children suggest that knowledge of the kinship lexicon, and its proper application, comes about through imitating older children. In general, a crawling and babbling infant is 'talked at' more by children (especially siblings) than by adults; and, at an age when the child struggles to master complicated grammatical conventions, the older children mock and tease him into acceptable usage. Presumably, knowledge of kinterms develops in a similar manner. Whereas interviewing small children on such topics is virtually impossible, older children and young adolescents are eager to co-operate; interestingly, they commonly fail to discriminate kin categories which are distinguished in adult usage. Cross-parallel distinctions succumb to a generalised extension of parent and sibling terms 'across the board' in the appropriate generations. Indeed, my impression is that in most cases full mastery of the kinship lexicon does not come until early adulthood, when the exigencies of marriage and jural succession require competence in this domain.

In contrast with the vernacular usage, Arapesh-speakers rely heavily on Pidgin kinterms in contexts of address, especially the terms *kandere* (*kinsman on the mother's side*, var. *kandere-mama*) and *tambu* (*relative-in-law*). Use of these terms is practically universal in the society, including by elderly persons whose general grasp of Pidgin is rudimentary or nonexistent. The only other domain which Pidgin has penetrated quite

so thoroughly is the vocabulary of abuse and obscenity, an interesting sociolinguistic phenomenon which is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The Ilahita kinship lexicon is shown in Table 1. In its merging of parallel cousins and siblings, and in its distinctive cross-cousin terms, the system is somewhat Iroquois-like in its extensions (Murdock 1949:223), but the extensive bilateral merging within generations would suggest that the system is essentially Modified Hawaiian in type (H.W. Scheffler, personal communication).⁸ Beyond the first (ascending and descending) generation, this extension is seen to obliterate cross-parallel, relative age (in a linking kinsman) and consanguineal-affinal distinctions, with sex of *Alter* remaining as the only distinguishing feature within that generational category. It should be noted, however, that application of these terms is subject to a minimum appropriateness in the relative ages of *Ego* and *Alter*. That *Ego* may refer to *Alter* by the 'proper' term is not to say that he will do so, except under very unusual circumstances. Thus, in cases where age-peers are technically related as *bafalomwen* (*grandfather/grandson*), they are far more likely to refer to one another with sibling terms, the particular form selected being a function of relative age rather than of genealogical standing.⁹ The likelihood of this occurring is related to factors of residential proximity and interactional history, but when these factors are inauspicious the greater probability is that *Ego* and *Alter* will regard each other as non-kinsmen, rather than employ reference terms which imply intimacy ('*brother*') or which do not reflect their similar life situations ('*grandfather*/'*grandson*').

TABLE 1
Ilahita Kinship Terminology

1 <i>akonamwi</i> ^a	FFF,FMF,MFF,MMF,SSS,DSS,SDS,DDS; all consanguineal and affinal males of the third ascending and descending generations
2 <i>akomwi</i>	FFM,FMM,MFM,MMM,DDD,SSD,DSD,SDD; all consanguineal and affinal females of the third ascending and descending generations
3 <i>bafalomwi</i>	FF,FFB,FFZH,MF,MFB,MFZH,SS,BSS,WBSS,DS,WBDS,BDS; all consanguineal and affinal males of the second ascending and descending generations
4 <i>ehamwi</i>	FM,FMZ,FMBW,MM,MMZ,MMBW,SD,ZSD,HZSD,DD,ZDD,HZDD; all consanguineal and affinal females of the second ascending and descending generations
5 <i>ahalomwi</i>	F,FB,FZH*,FMZS,FMBS*,FFZS*,MZH,MH,MFBS,MMZS,MFZS*,MMBS*; in the first ascending generation, all male agnates and husbands of female agnates; all husbands of females <i>Ego</i> calls <i>mama'wi</i>

6	mama'wi	M,MZ,MFBD,MMZD,MFZD*,MMBD*,FZ*,FBW,FW,FMBD*,FPZD*; in the first ascending generation, all female agnates and wives of male agnates; all wives of males <i>Ego</i> calls ahalomwi
7	tanganamwi	MB,(m.s.)ZS,(m.s.)ZDH,FZH*
8	tangomwi	MBW,(m.s.)ZD,(m.s.)ZSW,FZ*
9	sahalomwi	eB,FeBS,MeZS,HeB,(w.s.)eZH,WeZH,FeBDH,MeZDH,(w.s.)MBDH,(w.s.)FZDH
10	sahomwi	eZ,FeBD,MeZD,WeZ,(m.s.)eBW,HeBW,FeBSW,MeZSW
11	owalomwi	yB,FyBS,MyZS,HyB,(w.s.)yZH,WyZH,FyBDH,MyZDH,(w.s.)MBDH,(w.s.)FZDH
12	owamwi	yZ,FyBD,MyZD,WyZ,(m.s.)yBW,HyBW,FyBSW,MyZSW
13	nemata'w unamwi	FZS,FZD,FFZS*,FFZD*,MFZS*,MFZD*
14	amen inamwi	MBS,MBD,FMBS*,FMBD*,MMBS*,MMBD*
15	nengalomwi	S,BS,WZS,WBS,HBS,HZS,(w.s.)ZS
16	nengamwi	D,BD,WZD,WBD,HBD,HZD,(w.s.)ZD
17	mafomwi	(m.s.)ZH,(m.s.)FBDH,WB,(m.s.)MZDH,WMZS,WFB
18	nenganamwi	HZ,(w.s.)BW,(w.s.)MBSW,(w.s.)FZSW
19	mafomwi nasi'akw	WBW
20	nenganamwi kwasiena	HZH
21	waolumwi	W,(m.s.)FZSW,(m.s.)MBSW
22	waolunamwi	H,HMBS,HFZS
23	nengaona	DH,BDH,WZDH,WBDH,HBDH,HZDH,(m.s.)MBDH,(m.s.)FZDH
24	mefimwi	SW,BSW,WZSW,WBSW,HZSW,HBSW
25	fafomwi	WF,WFB,WFZH,WMB,WMZH,HF,HFB,HFZH,HMB,HMZH; in the first ascending generation, all male consanguines and affines of spouse
26	ma'mwi	WM,WMZ,WMBW,WFZ,WFBW,HM,HMZ,HMBW,HFZ,HFBW

^aForms are given in the first person singular possessive, signified by the suffix -wi; kinterm No.23 is irregular in this regard. The third person singular form has a suffix indicating gender: thus, akonamen, but akoma'w, for kinterm Nos.1 and 2, respectively.

An asterisk indicates that the kintype has alternative designations and appears more than once on the table. Usage here depends on various sociological factors and on the degree of familiarity between *Ego* and *Alter*.

This practice of sibling-ising relationships - a source of some exasperation in genealogy collecting - has the effect of rectifying wide age discrepancies within genealogical generations. That is, because descendant generations relate to one another as though *Ego* and

alter were 'siblings' of a sort - not realising that an adjustment had occurred in actual usage - the practice, so to speak, moves groups up and down in genealogical space. This is not done by decree or wilful design,¹⁰ but is the result of individuals designating one another in ways that seem 'natural' and appropriate in the circumstances.

Other features of the terminological system call for interpretation, but space allows only a passing mention of them. First, though the system features broad lateral merging within generations, there is a special designation of MB/(m.s.)ZCh. The possible recency of this intrusion may account for the descriptiveness of cross-cousin terms (lit. '*offspring of the male*', recip. '*offspring of the female*').¹¹ It may also be associated with the lack of polarity in the reciprocals MBW/HZCh, on the one hand, and SpMB/(m.s.)ZChSp, on the other. The second unusual feature is that male *Ego* refers to the spouses of his cross-cousins as '*wife*' (MBSW-FZSW) and '*son-in-law*' (MBDH-FZDH), with the expected polar reciprocals. Female *Ego*, on the other hand, refers to these persons as though they were married to her siblings, and they reciprocate accordingly. Thus, for female *Ego*, MBDH-FZDH is '*brother*' (elder or younger depending on age of linking female relative to *Ego*) and MBSW-FZSW is '*sister-in-law*'.

5.3.4. SIBLING-TERM MORPHOLOGY

It can be seen in Table 2 that, although there is no term which we may gloss as '*sibling*' or even '*brother*' or '*sister*', the recurrence of two basic stems suggests a primary meaning of '*elder sibling*' and '*younger sibling*'. The Arapesh possess three categories of sibling terms, each with a distinct set of designata. Before discussing the semantics of these terms, it will be shown that the morphological relationship between the categories can be explicated by inferences drawn from grammatical conventions in the language.

To begin with, though the stems saho- and owa- clearly signify '*elder*' and '*younger*', respectively, they are bound morphemes and do not occur independently. However, their morphological relationship appears to exemplify a common sociolinguistic phenomenon in this culture, namely, the expression of conceptual inversions with linguistic metatheses. The rising inflection of owa- and the falling inflection of saho- are, in tandem, a manifestation of this pattern.¹²

TABLE 2
Arapesh Sibling Terms

CATEGORY	TERM		ENGLISH GLOSS
	Singular	Plural	
1	sahalomen	sahopwen	<i>elder brother(s)</i>
	owalomen	owapwen	<i>younger brother(s)</i>
	sahomen	sahowamen	<i>elder sister(s)</i>
	owamen	owawamen	<i>younger sister(s)</i>
2	sahopwas inguf		<i>those of the elder brothers' line</i>
	owapwas inguf		<i>those of the younger brothers' line</i>
3	sahopwas		<i>elder brothers</i>
	owapwas		<i>younger brothers</i>

The plural forms of Category-1 terms are grammatically irregular. That is to say, the medial consonant shift involved in pluralisation deviates from the usual practice of using plural suffixes, which are specified within a system of 15 noun classes. With few exceptions all nouns are pluralised according to which noun class they belong. On morphological grounds, we would expect Category-1 terms to be pluralised by substituting the final -n with a final -s, preceded by a slight vowel shift: thus, sahalomen → sahalomas, owalomen → owalomas, and so forth. This is not, however, what happens; moreover, actual usage can only be comprehended by comparing Category 1 with Category 3.

If we regard the masculine plurals of Category 1 as themselves in need of pluralising, then, applying the common convention just described, we may predict that the transformations would be sahopwen → sahopwas and owapwen → owapwas. The new 'plurals' are, in fact, precisely the terms we find in Category 3.¹³ The semantic significance of this super-plural is that the designatum of each Category-3 term is a class of males which is itself a congeries of coeval subclasses. This will be discussed further below.

With respect to Category 2, the -inguf suffix distinguishing these terms from those of Category 3 is a morpheme used for pluralising the nouns of certain classes, but its function in the present context is not that of yet another (super-super-) plural. Rather, it effectively qualifies the Category-3 terms by stressing the unitary, internally undifferentiated character of the designated class. In this capacity -inguf is like certain other morphemes which may, for example, be tacked on place names to signify the collective residents thereof.

Moreover, the designata of the terms of Categories 2 and 3 are to some extent coextensive, and therefore the *-inguf* suffix disambiguates the reference.

In sum, the morphological relationships in Table 2 have to do with a singular form (Category 1) and three species of plural: an irregular simple plural (Category 1), a regular super-plural (Category 3), and a regular collective plural (Category 2).¹⁴ That the categories are related in this way entitles us to view them as grammatical variants of the same set of terms, or more precisely, the same set of basic stems. Hence, the distribution of these terms over the range of designata is legitimately perceived as extensions from the focal kintypes '*elder brother*' and '*younger brother*'. The categories of sibling terms therefore constitute *in toto* a cognitive subset within the Arapesh terminological system. Equally important, however, is the fact that they are linguistically distinct, and thus the extension entails the transfer of certain cognitive components (the *saho-/owa-* significata) and the modification of others (the scales of plurality indicated by the suffixes). These linguistic features are the basis for interpreting the semantic dimension of these sibling terms. To simplify the discussion, I shall hereafter refer to the terms by category or by stem and category (*saho-1*, *saho-2*, etc.).

5.3.5. DESIGNATA

Starting with the focal kintypes (eB,yB,eZ,yZ), Table 3 specifies the range of distribution of Category-1 terms. As indicated earlier (see Table 2), the remaining two categories are exclusively masculine and exclusively plural. Furthermore, in contrast with Category 1, they lose their egocentric focus and are assigned instead to designated social classes; that is, (male) *Ego* may use one of these terms to designate a class of which he himself is a member. Category-2 terms designate the complementary subclans within each patriclan. There are always and only two such subclans within a patriclan, with the exception of clans which are very small, in which case this dual relationship obtains with another clan related to it through fictive or forgotten genealogical ties. The age-option (*saho-/owa-*) identifies the genealogically senior and junior groups (usually subclans), respectively. And, although they share a clan-name and totem, members of complementary subclans do not normally regard each other as kinsmen.

TABLE 3
Category-1 Denotata

ENGLISH GLOSS	DESCRIPTION ^a
1 <i>sibling(s)</i>	offspring of F and M
2 <i>half-sibling(s)</i>	offspring of F by a female other than M, the age-option determined by whether this FW is junior or senior to M, or, in case of serial polygyny, whether this FW followed or preceded M in sequence; offspring of M by a male other than F, the age-option determined by the place of M in this MH's sequence of wives
3 <i>step-sibling(s)</i>	FWCh (where FW≠M), with junior age-option to signify prior, consanguineal link of Ego to F; MHCh (where MH≠F), with senior age-option to signify prior, consanguineal link of Alter to MH
4 <i>parallel cousin(s)</i>	MZCh, FBCh, with age-option determined by relative age of M/MZ and F/FB, respectively
5 <i>close agnate(s)</i>	co-generational of Ego's patrilineal segment with whom genealogical connection can be traced, the age-option determined by relative ages of linking ancestors
6 <i>intermediate agnate(s)</i>	co-generational of Ego's subclan with whom genealogical connection may not be traceable, the age-option determined by relative seniority of Ego's patrilineal segment as against the patrilineal segment of Alter
7 <i>collateral(s)</i>	child of parent's cross-cousin, with age-option determined by relative ages of parent and parent's cross-cousin; child of parent's parallel-cousin, with age-option determined by relative ages of grandparental sibling-pair ^b
8 <i>primary affine(s)</i>	spouse of same-sex sibling, appropriately gendered, with age-option determined by age of linking sibling relative to Ego
9 <i>secondary affine(s)</i>	spouse of spouse's same-sex sibling, with age-option determined by relative ages of the linking sibling-pair

^aSingle-letter abbreviations denote primary kin.

^bIn the latter case, actual usage would be patterned after that employed by parents of Ego and Alter, in their relationship of 'sibling'.

Category-3 terms refer to the two initiation classes in the society. Between members of the respective classes, neither descent nor genealogical relationship is presumed, and the age-option is determined by the relative ritual seniority of the one class as against the other. At points in the initiation cycle the statuses and associated terms reverse themselves, so that at one time *Ego* may belong to saho-3, but at the next turn in the cycle he (and his ritual group-mates) become owa-3.

5.3.6. DISCUSSION

Scheffler has recently noted that, 'Structural semantics is concerned with ... the logical relations among the several senses of a word as it appears in a variety of specifiable linguistic and social contexts of usage' (Scheffler 1972:314). In his view, considerable confusion has arisen in the study of kinship semantics by a failure to distinguish between the distinctive and non-distinctive feature of kin categories. A semantic condition of signification obtains when the relationship between *Ego* and *Alter* possesses genealogically-based features which are criterial to *Alter's* denotation by the kinterm, and which constitute the necessary and sufficient features defining the category designated by that term (cf. Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971:4). Thus, to use Scheffler's example (Scheffler 1972:320), in English usage *Ego's* genitor is designated '*father*' by virtue of having sired *Ego*, regardless of whether or not *Alter* behaves as a '*father*' should. Nevertheless, certain rights and duties are ascribed to men in respect of their offspring and the expression '*father*' connotes these attributes. They are contingent features, and neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for membership in the kin category designated '*father*'. In general, even assuming that all members of a class share such connotative attributes, they remain non-essential features of the class *qua* kinclass.

It is not uncommon, however, for a kinterm like '*father*' to be applied to non-kin and thus to designate kin-like categories. This may occur through metaphorical extension, which

... consists in suspending one or more of the defining features (criterial attributes) of the primary sense of the word and substituting in its place some feature of connotative meaning which is associated with the primary sense of some simple widened sense of the word. In the process connotative features become criterial... (Scheffler 1972:319).

The phrase '*he is a father to me*' may mean that *Alter* possesses certain jural and/or behavioural attributes which qualify him for inclusion in a category ('*father*') conceptually related to, but separated

from, the category of genitor (also '*father*'). With these conceptual distinctions in mind, let us consider Arapesh sibling terms.

As one surveys the range of Category-1 denotata (see Table 3), it can be seen that while they embody a semantic condition of signification, the way in which criterial features become attenuated discloses the most likely course of metaphorical extension. Thus, with respect to those denotata unambiguously defined by genealogical criteria (Nos. 1-5, 7-9), the terms possess singular and plural forms which are used appropriately. Members of denotatum 6 ('*intermediate agnate(s)*') are referred to by the same terms; however, the criterion for selecting an age-option ceases to be 'relative ages of linking siblings' and becomes 'relative seniority of *Ego's* patrilineal segment as against the patrilineal segment of *Alter*'. This rule applies whether or not genealogical connection can be traced.

Now, it might be argued that the criterion for age-option selection in this case is still genealogical since the matter of seniority is traced to the birth-order of the male sibling-group from which the patrilineal segments are descended. While not denying that for the Arapesh descent-group relations ultimately imply genealogical connection, whether remembered or not, I would say that analytical insistence on this implication may at times obscure or conceal the cognitive aspect of kinterm usage. Observations indicate that, at the range of '*intermediate agnate*', the saliency of the genealogical feature diminishes considerably. *Ego* is raised hearing his brothers refer to 'that group of men our own age living in the next hamlet' as *saho-1*, even though they may be younger in age than *Ego* and his brothers. Moreover, *Ego* hears his father refer to his (the father's) co-generational in the neighbouring group in the same way. Sibling-term attribution thus appears to shift somewhat from denotation of *Alter* by genealogical criteria to designation of a class of individuals who are collectively related to *Ego's* class, with denotation of a particular *Alter* derivative of his membership in the referent class. Significantly, these 'classes' are social groups, co-resident males forming a closely-knit agnatic network. And yet the shift is not complete. Ambiguity is evident in that the terms are identical to those used with reference to close kintypes, the persistence of a singular form allows individualised denotation, and in certain circumstances genealogical connection may be a salient feature. This suggests that the designation '*intermediate agnate*' is on the threshold of metaphoric usage.

As noted above, Category-2 terms refer to complementary subclans which are perceived as plural and collectively masculine. These subclans

are exogamous, they occasionally recognise subsidiary totems, their constituent patrilineal segments are commonly domiciled near one another in the village ward, and some pairs of them have myths tracing common descent from two brothers or paternal half-brothers. Although the designata technically include female agnates, it is rare for a woman to be referred to by one of these terms, the reasons being fairly obvious. First, patri-virilocality entails that these females disperse upon marriage, after which (if not before) their subclan of origin is a matter of indifference to an *Ego* in the opposite subclan. Upon departure from their natal subclans, their places are taken by their brothers' wives. The second reason is that, whereas male agnates of a subclan form a corporate unity in matters of land tenure, marriage exchange, war-making and ritual, the female agnates are effectively not a part of this jural collectivity again, their places are taken by their brothers' wives.¹⁵

At this point it is necessary to distinguish carefully between two aspects of Category-2 usage: first, the convention whereby a subclan designates the opposite subclan as '*brothers*', and, second, the fixed age-options attending this designation. Members of opposite subclans do not, by virtue of their descent status and despite the sibling terminology, regard each other as relatives, and there are no restrictions against intermarriage. Paradoxically, the temporal remoteness of their assumed common origin negates the sense of kinship between them, while at the same time it justifies a unity which separates them from all other subclans. Thus the sibling terms are indicative of a relationship modelled on kinship, and perhaps historically derived from kinship, but one whose functions now concern the activities mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The heritage of common origin (which may or may not be enshrined in legend) also prescribes which subclan is designated '*elder*' and which '*younger*', thus ignoring relative age and generational status between individual members of the respective groups. There is a precedent for this usage even within the semantics of Category 1 where, for example, the age-option *Ego* uses in denoting his FBS is determined by the birth order of their fathers rather than by their own chronological ages. This practice - occurring in the extended uses of Category 1, but more attenuated in Category 2 - re-defines, as it were, elder/younger to mean senior/junior, thereby assigning contextual saliency to the rights and duties normatively associated with this relationship (see above). Between close kinsmen a situation dystonic with respect to relative age and seniority contains potential conflict, for the senior (but

younger) party is occasionally required to exercise prerogatives over the junior (but older) brother, a man who has perhaps dominated him for much of his early life.

A parallel occurrence between members of opposite subclans is technically incapable of producing tension of this particular sort. In the first place, subclans are slightly removed from one another residentially, and thus a dominance relationship between *Ego* and *Alter* would less likely have derived from interaction during their formative years. Second, even when their history includes such interaction, disputes arising between the individuals by virtue of their subclan membership are immediately taken over by the larger groups as common cause. That is, the dispute is defined corporately and can only be litigated corporately. In cases where the disputants are very senior men, it may be difficult to separate the individual from the corporate contents of the issue; nevertheless, it remains theoretically impossible for individuals to dispute as members of opposite subclans. This is merely another way of saying that Category-1 terms have to do with individuals while Category-2 terms are concerned with groups; hence, a dystonic situation may occur in the former but not in the latter. This distinction, moreover, is reflected in the exclusive plural form associated with Category 2.

From the foregoing it is clear that a degree of metaphorisation is present in the semantics of Category 2. Whereas putative genealogical connection may warrant a sibling designation between descent groups, the same cannot be said of the age-option component. That is, while individuals or homologous groups may be related as '*brothers*', the latter - which contain all ages - cannot be conceived as elder/younger except in a metaphorical sense. This metaphor focusses on the connotative feature of the relationship as it exists in Category 1, viz., the presumption of senior/junior status distinctions between brothers. And yet, despite this usage, as well as various sub-totemic insignia symbolising super-subordination, the rights and privileges of paired subclans are exactly equivalent.

In conclusion, the age-option component of Category-2 terms appears metaphorically to identify a relationship founded on reciprocity - a notion often cast by the Arapesh as a state of asymmetrical complementarity - and the model for this is present in the structure of sibling terms. Additionally, this terminology masks the jural equivalence of subclans. Why is this necessary or desirable? In brief, the positing of such equality would (in the Arapesh view) underscore the potential cleavage between paired subclans and the viability of a separate existence. Under conditions of chronic warfare, which prevailed prior to

1950, reduction of village strength was rigorously avoided; accordingly, many of the social-control and ritual conventions of the society were (and are) more or less explicitly aimed at restoring harmony during times of internal stress (Tuzin 1974). The semantics of Category 2, which may be viewed as part of this total adaptational pattern, expresses an interdependency derived from the connotative features of real brotherhood. As we will now see, a more pronounced version of this convention has occurred in the application of Category-3 terms to the society-wide initiation classes.

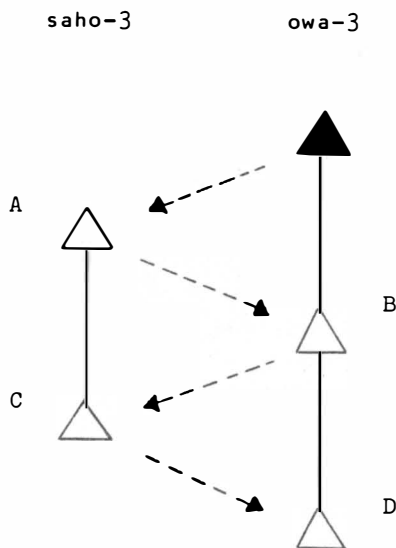
Category-3 terms are entirely metaphorical in the sense that the connotative feature of Category-1 designation - that of senior/junior status - is here made strictly criterial to terminological attribution. When asked why the plurals of Category 1 cannot be used interchangeably with Category-3 terms, informants explain that the latter are not 'really' brothers, but rather the social relationship between them resembles the fraternal tie in some ways: the non-kin, kin-like metaphor. These resemblances centre on the relative statuses (in this case, ritual statuses) of the groups vis-à-vis one another. Unlike genealogical brotherhood, where *Ego* is saho-1 to some *Alters* and owa-1 to some other *Alters*, in this semantic domain *Ego* is a member of a class of males defined and named in terms of the opposite (terminologically polar) class of males. Thus, at a given point in time *Ego* (and approximately half the men of the society) are saho-3, while the other half of male society are owa-3. Consistent with this sociocentric usage is the exclusively plural form, specifically - for reasons we shall discover in a moment - a super-plural form.

The situation in Category 3 is complicated by the fact that the statuses and terms reverse themselves periodically in the initiation cycle: if *Ego* is saho-3 now, with the next turn in the cycle he and his group become owa-3, and their ritual opposites become saho-3. This alternation aspect confirms that the criterial feature of term attribution is senior/junior ritual (and jural) status,¹⁶ an element which is merely connotative in the genealogically-based Category-1 relationship. That this is so, is revealed even more clearly in the connection between these society-wide initiation classes and the units through which they operate - the subclans.

Category-3 terms have a general referent, viz., the two halves of Arapesh male society, but this meaning is also specifiable to the polar subclans within each patriclan. In other words, the social groups referred to by saho-2/owa-2, on the one hand, and saho-3/owa-3, on the other, are co-extensive; the difference is that, whereas the latter periodically reverse themselves with respect to labelled groups, the former remain constant.

Furthermore, within the context of Category-3 usage the relationship operates at two levels simultaneously. An *owa-3 Ego* refers to all men of the opposite initiation class as *saho-3*, and on ceremonial occasions the performing roles are taken by these large groups. However, *Ego* recognises certain of the men of the opposite group (ideally members of the opposite subclan) as his particular initiation partners, a relationship both parties have inherited from their fathers. As shown schematically in Figure 1, the paired patrilineal lines initiate each other into the successive grades of the men's secret cult, such that A initiates B, B initiates A's son (C), C initiates B's son (D), and so forth.

FIGURE 1
Initiation Sequence



Initiation entails acquiring from one's partner the paraphernalia associated with the named spirit(s) of the particular grade, a spirit 'owned' by the clan to which both partners belong.¹⁷ Because there are five grades in the cult, the *owa-3* group, who are conceived of as the junior initiands, are in fact acting as initiators with respect to lower grades of the cult. Superior ritual status (designated *saho-3*) is assigned to the group currently in possession of the paraphernalia associated with the penultimate grade of the cult. Moreover, surrounding each initiation rite, there is a series of lavish feasts. The

food flows in both directions between partner groups, though the participants regard it as payment to the senior group by the junior group for the latter's initiation.

Recalling the earlier discussion on subclans, it can be seen that reversible ritual statuses are here being superimposed on constant genealogical (*qua* descent) statuses. At one phase in the initiation cycle the ascendant subclan is also ritually senior (*saho-3*); at the next phase the same group - still genealogically ascendant - becomes ritually junior (*owa-3*), and vice versa.¹⁸ This further confirms that the terminological extensions linking genealogical, descent, and ritual spheres are semantically distinguished by differences in the nature of the relative-age option, this being a feature which in the inner ranges of the semantic field (Category 1) derives from the birth-order of the living, or of the easily remembered dead. At the broader ranges of descent alignments (Category 2), where genealogical connection is problematical or nonexistent, the relative-age option is preserved, albeit semantically altered to apply to the fixed hierarchical ordering of allegedly connected descent groups. That is, the relative ages of *Ego* and *Alter* is made a fiction contingent on presumed birth-orders occurring in mythical time, or else beyond memory altogether. Finally, in the metaphorical extensions of Category 3, the fixed relationship between subclans becomes apparent rather than real, and the 'absolute' status differential implied by the terminology becomes a fiction also, contingent on the alternating sequences of the initiation cycle.

In sum, the kinterm extensions disclose a coherent expansion of significant social relations in the dimension of structural time. The inner semantic range is consistent with the immediate interpersonal relations of individuals raised in relatively close proximity, relations where birth-order directly affects matters of inheritance, jural rights and obligations, and the physical domination of elder over younger during the formative years. Temporal precedence becomes something else when viewed as an element in the intercourse between agnatically related descent groups. Attention shifts to the collective, corporate nature of the interacting entities. When *Ego* refers to *Alter* in these terms the criterion he uses is the jural standing of their two groups in relation to one another. This does not imply that he must refer to *Alter* in these terms: he may well refer to him by his proper name, by a kinterm appropriate to their particular relationship (e.g. MB, WB), or even in rare circumstances by the term appropriate to 'sibling' as a kintype. However, by using the set *saho-2/owa-2*, *Ego* is unambiguously contextualising the reference: *Alter* may be referrable by many other terms, but here and now what is stressed is his membership in a social

group jurally relevant to *Ego's* own group. Use of sibling-term variants injects a temporal dimension into the relationship which is patterned after, but phenomenally distinct from, that obtaining between 'real' brothers as kinterm denotata; the '*elder/younger*' component of sibling terms is drawn upon to metaphorise the jural relations between complementary subclans.

Sibling terminology in the context of ritual categories again imparts a seemingly temporal element in the relations, whether as defined by chronological precedence or fixed descent-based hierarchies. However, this time there is an ironic twist: the preservation of relative-age significata stresses the veritable timelessness of the ritual relationship. In an atemporal dimension appropriate to sacred activities, the polar statuses may be reversed - indeed, must be reversed. The elder becomes younger, the younger elder; the senior becomes junior, the junior senior. The asymmetry of the moment dissolves into balanced equivalence when cast into the timeless perspective of the initiation cycle as a whole.

Significantly, however, this abstraction is never realised. The alternating states of inequality must logically never end, since for the Arapesh true equality of structurally equivalent parts can only be emergent in the continuing state of alternating inequality. Short of redesigning the entire initiation system, the effect of some great leader declaring the initiation groups equal would be to force indigent theorists into devising other ways of maintaining functional equivalence between groups. As Forge (1972:533-4) has observed, in achievement-oriented societies the maintenance of equality between men and groups is a prodigious task; indeed, such a state is almost impossible to contemplate in New Guinea. However, the Ilahita have achieved what appears to be the next-best thing: they have established a sanctioned inequality between specified groups which conventionally overturns itself at regular intervals.

The problem of maintaining solidarity between structurally coeval groups (or individuals) is something few New Guinea societies have overcome - or perhaps would wish to. In the Sepik, however, villages are often large and enduring, suggesting that the ritual structures described above, reported in varying forms throughout the Sepik basin, have proved an effective way of managing divisive tendencies within the polities. In Ilahita at least, the linguistic metaphors used for the ritual categories provide a clue as to what these divisive tendencies might be, and how the symbolic relationships effect management of them. In this culture, and reportedly elsewhere in the Sepik (Whiting 1941: 55ff.; Mead 1963:174,178; Bateson 1936:213; Hogbin 1970:87), fraternal

relations are, for a variety of reasons, fraught with rivalry and tension. Numerous case-histories recount how major social cleavages began with a falling-out between brothers or more distantly related agnates. At the same time, countervailing pressures favouring mutual help and support amongst agnates (war, exchange, marriage, etc.) have produced an awareness that a modicum of fraternal harmony is highly desirable.

It is this fundamental ambivalence - aggressive rivalry combined with acknowledged mutual dependence and amity - which also informs the ritual relations of Category 3 and the descent relations of Category 2. In these metaphorical and quasi-metaphorical domains, however, the rivalrous component is closely controlled by the conventions governing the symbolic contexts in which it is acted out. These contexts being sacred celebrations of the power and coherence of the total group, in which Category-3 relations are highlighted, but where also the inter-dependencies rooted in the other categories are also infused with religious meaning, the prescribed agonistic displays are enlisted to serve the very ends which, if allowed to occur freely, they would subvert. Moreover, by linguistically harnessing the sibling relationship, with the load of psychocultural connotations that implies, the metaphor appears well-suited to resonate the intuitions and experiences of most individuals in the congregation.

5.3.7. FINAL REMARKS

It is, I think, worth considering why New Guinea anthropologists and linguists have generally neither sought nor found place in the inner circles of modern kinship theory, the consequence being that these general developments have left New Guinea largely untouched.¹⁹ To begin with, a high priority in New Guinea linguistic research has been the establishment of taxonomic relationships in a complex linguistic field which, not so many years ago, was thought to have no order at all. Pursuing this and other specifically linguistic problems, these researchers have left the analysis of kinship terminologies to anthropologists working in the region. The lack of direction in the anthropological treatment of these phenomena is, in my view, revealing in terms of the general nature of New Guinea society and also in terms of the character of modern kinship theory.

To the extent that the 'social-category school' of kinship theory is relevant to New Guinea contexts, it presupposes an agreement as to what the significant social groups are: the principles governing recruitment and membership, patterns of inter-group relations of war, alliance,

exchange, and so forth. Now, a substantial part of the monographic and theoretical literature on New Guinea society is concerned with precisely this point of definition. Having landed the red-herring of 'African Models' (Barnes 1962), New Guinea anthropologists are still seeking social-structural and processual paradigms having applicability beyond the immediate ethnographic situation. Consequently, systematic attempts to analyse kinship terminologies in the terms set forth by, for example, prescriptive-alliance theorists must necessarily at this time founder on this unresolved and analytically prior problem.

The apparent (and perhaps inherent) fluidity of New Guinea kinship and descent may also have inhibited the adoption of formal methods of kinship analysis. As the anthropologist formulates models of kinship behaviour and terminology, there frequently lurks in him the suspicion that these generalisations may not apply even outside the immediate group with whom he is living. If he stays long enough in one place, or visits other communities in the culture, he may well find that his neatly defined components of kinship attribution are manipulated in every conceivable manner. In this situation the formalistically inclined anthropologist is likely to feel himself in a double bind. That is to say, the mixture of synchronic and diachronic complexities, with attendant formal inconsistencies, makes the exercise technically very demanding. The dividend is, presumably, psychologically valid insights into indigenous cognitive structures; but, disconcertingly, a successful execution of the formal method may in the circumstances actually entail prior delineation of these same structures, or at least some fairly specific assumptions about them. Unless the formal analysis is to be an end in itself - an objective most anthropologists rightly eschew - or unless the goal is the more worthy one of producing abstractions of comparative value, the analyst must decide whether the gain is equal to the effort. The paucity of such treatments, implying a negative judgement by most researchers, is symptomatic of the narrow scope of much New Guinea theory. This is neither to endorse formal analysis nor to condemn New Guinea anthropology, but rather to indicate what seems to be a felt inappropriateness in combining them at this time. The distinct impression one gets reading the literature on this area is that, for various reasons, the systematic comparative study of New Guinea cultures has hardly begun. To be sure, some progress has been made in characterising the major sub-regions (e.g. the Highlands, the Austro-nesian-speaking coastal areas, etc.) and there have been a few comparative studies and symposia, but these amount to a small proportion of the scientific output. The continuing priority appears rather to be the documenting of relatively unacculturated peoples before it is too late.

The absence of any discernible trend in the analysis of New Guinea kinship terminology, in either linguistic or anthropological dimension, is, in my view, reflective of this general state of affairs. Pending, however, the further development of comparative ethnographic theory, there are issues and perspectives emerging at the level of general theory which provide possible avenues of approach to the New Guinea material. In considering the semantics of Arapesh sibling terms, in their linguistic setting, the present chapter is offered as an example of what one of those avenues might be.

N O T E S

1. Buchler and Selby (1968) have reviewed the field; see also Barnes (1971). Broadly speaking, it is divided between those who treat kin-term taxonomies as derived from, and indicative of, significant social categories and processes, and those who contend that such systems are derived from, and indicative of, genealogical space and the formal properties of human cognition. For clear statements of the former view, see Leach (1958) and Needham (1971); for the latter, see Lounsbury (1964, 1965), Scheffler and Lounsbury (1971), Goodenough (1965), and the critiques by Burling (1964) and Schneider (1965).

2. The scarcity of published analyses may soon be rectified by a collection of essays on kinship in the New Guinea Highlands currently being prepared under the editorship of Edwin A. Cook and Denise O'Brien (n.d.). It should be mentioned that other important works (e.g. Meggitt 1965; Wagner 1967; Glasse 1968; Strathern 1972) deal with kinship terminology *inter alia* in the context of analysing descent principles.

3. Research was conducted during 21 months of fieldwork in the period 1969-72, while the author was a Research Scholar in the Department of Anthropology, Australian National University. Grateful acknowledgement is made to that institution for providing financial support and academic auspices, and also to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, whose supplementary grant-in-aid enabled the author to return to New Guinea for an important cult ceremony.

The author is also indebted to Roy G. D'Andrade and Melford E. Spiro for helpful discussions during the preparation of this chapter, and especially to David K. Jordan and Harold W. Scheffler for their penetrating criticisms of an earlier draft. Naturally, it should not be assumed that these scholars are in agreement with all points of the analysis.

4. The villages of this region are among the largest in all of New Guinea. Ilahita, the fieldwork base and the village after which the dialect takes its name, numbers over 1500 - the second largest village in the province.

5. These developments have also yielded sharp divergences from other Arapesh-speaking cultures, among them the Mountain Arapesh (Mead 1938, 1940, 1947; Fortune 1942). The Arapesh family of languages, it should be added, belongs to the Torricelli Phylum, whose speakers occupy a 100-mile belt of southern slopes and foothills along the Torricelli Range (Laycock 1973).

6. Mead (1947:185) reports a similar situation among the 'Plains Arapesh' who, although speaking the Mountain Arapesh language, appear from Mead's accounts to be culturally more similar to the Ilahita Arapesh. Such restricted usage does not appear to be common in the Sepik region.

7. Pidgin kinterms may also be used in such situations. Naturally, *Alter* registers the hyperbole and/or irregular usages, from which ensues an unspoken regress of the '*You know/I know you know...*' variety. Suffice it to say that the communicative event is rather more complex than it appears.

8. Indeed the cumbersome descriptiveness of cross-cousin terms may partly explain why *Ego* occasionally lapses into referring to these persons with sibling terms. It is quite likely that such irregularity is cognitively significant.

9. To those who would argue that this is evidence contra-indicating siblingness as a primary component of what I am calling 'sibling terms', I can only say that an explication of why this is so would lead the chapter too far astray. Cf. my adoption of the extensionist perspective in the Introduction (see 5.3.1.).

10. I observed no instances of genealogical manipulation used as a political strategy; neither is genealogical wisdom *per se* a potent political weapon as it is in some New Guinea societies (*vide* Epstein 1969:191-2).

11. The only other occasion for descriptive reference is with regard to certain secondary affines (see Table 1).

12. Note that in their singular forms, the feminine sibling terms appear to be unmarked, as against the masculine forms which possess an additional medial syllable. The significance of this - if any - has not yet been analysed.

13. Feminine forms are dropped out in the second and third categories, for reasons I shall discuss in the next section.

14. While it is true that the terms of Category 3 appear to precede (logically and/or historically) those of Category 2, by virtue of being unmarked in relation to them, the designata of these categories are essentially two aspects of the same referent.

15. The degree to which a woman takes up jural membership in her husband's agnatic group varies greatly according to individual temperament and physical proximity to her own agnatic group.

16. In Ilahita society ritual and jural seniority are closely conjoined as mutually reinforcing bases for social control. See Tuzin (1974).

17. Shown in the figure as individuals, the actual partnerships commonly obtain between male sibling groups, or between larger patrilineal segments with the subclans. In most cases the clan is large enough to support several such partnerships, with the paraphernalia replicated for each.

18. In contrast to a point made earlier regarding the carry-over of Category-1 connotations to Category 2, the conjunction between Category 2 and Category 3 consists of alternating states of syntony and dystony. One functionally important result is that the senior subclan is, by virtue of its periodic ritual inferiority, in no danger of establishing general and permanent superiority over the junior subclan.

19. I am aware that some New Guinea scholars (e.g. Ward Goodenough and John Barnes) are important contributors to kinship theory. On the whole, however, they have drawn very little on the New Guinea material in this aspect of their scholarship.

5.3.0. KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY IN A LINGUISTIC SETTING: A CASE STUDY

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P A R T 5.4.

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