

# Kinship & Descent

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## KINSHIP

- Social relationships of blood & marriage
- Kin groups form basis of most social, economic, and political activities in pre-industrial societies

Types:

- Consanguineal (blood)
- Affinal (through marriage) relations
- Fictive - someone in close ties with the family, family friends! "Uncle Sam"

## DESCENT

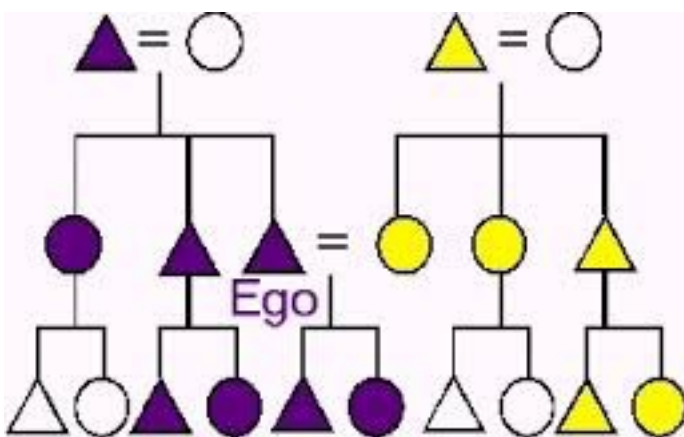
Descent groups - based on genealogical connections to *common ancestors*

Basic Types:

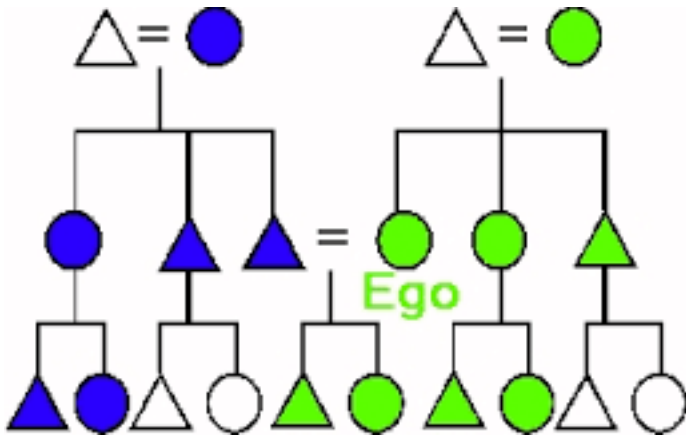
1. Unilineal Groups: *Patrilineal* (father) or *Matrilineal* (mother)
2. *Bilateral* (both of the above)

Kin charts (Triangle = male, Circle = female)

Patrilineal Descent



Matrilineal Descent



### UNILINEAL Descent Group

Recognized social grouping of consanguineal kin that provides framework for daily life

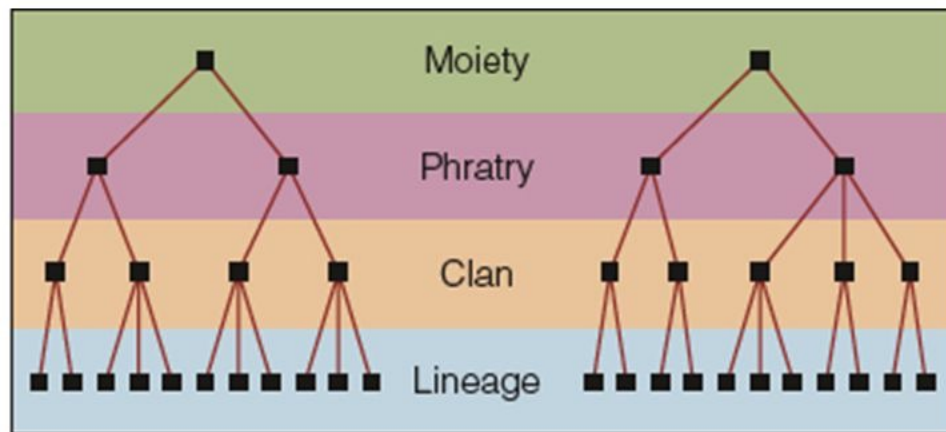
*Lineage*: known genealogical links; corporate groups

*Clans*: descent claimed from common ancestor, but exact genealogical links unknown

- Results of splits of large lineages
- Clan identification often reinforced by *totems*

*Phratries, Moieties*: Larger groupings of multiple clans

## Organizational Hierarchies of Lineages



- This diagram shows how lineages, clans, phratries, and moieties form an organizational hierarchy.
- Each moiety is subdivided into phratries, each phratry



is subdivided into clans, and each clan is subdivided into lineages.

### Functions of Unilineal Descent Groups

- Economic & Political functions:
  - Owns property-intergenerational transfer of land
  - Access to productive resources - land & labour; distributes goods
  - Regulates relations with other groups
- Ceremonial functions:
  - Control ceremonial rites and paraphernalia
  - Transfer of cultural knowledge and rituals
- Social functions:
  - Provide aid, identity, and security to members
  - Support old & sick

### Other unilineally-based descent systems

- **Double Descent** (double unilineal)
  - Both patrilineal & matrilineal (for different purposes)
  - Rare
    - Eg. Yako (Nigeria)
- **Ambilineal**
  - **Choice** of unilineal group affiliation
  - Flexible

### **BILATERAL Descent Groups**

Descent is traced through both male & female relations

**Kindred**: a small circle of paternal and maternal relatives

- Ego-centred
- Never the same for any 2 persons except siblings
- *Not* property owning *corporate group*

### **Bilateral Kinship Network: Kindred**

**Ego equally related to both mother's and father's sides**

(Note: This chart only shows ego's blood relatives, not affinal kin)



