

## **Clan, Marriage Practices and Kinship Terms Amongst the Ao and Sema Nagas<sup>1</sup>**

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In many Naga communities the bonds, duties and obligations of the clan cuts across religious bonds, for instance, the non-Christian Konyaks helping the Konyaks of the same clan in building a church in Wanching (Halmendorf: 1973:5). Conversely, despite conversion to Christianity, many Christian Nagas still observe the old customs (Sreedhar: 1980). Amongst the Semas, the bonds of kinship pervade every aspect of the social and religious life. For instance, when the maternal aunt of a man gets married, he is expected to offer certain specified items as presents to his maternal aunt, and her husband in his turn is expected to return these presents at the time of the marriage of his wl. sl. son. son.<sup>2</sup> This obligation of returning the presents is carried over to the next of kin of the mo. sl. hus. in the descending generation, in that the next of kin would have to return these presents if the mo. sl. hus. dies before the marriage of the son of his wl. sl. son. Similarly when a man in a Sema community gets married, his maternal uncle has to offer certain specified numbers of pigs, dogs, baskets of rice and Sema shawls to his sl. son who in his turn has to return these gifts when his mo. br. son gets married. These gifts, however, cannot be claimed back if the mo. br. has no male issue. Further, when a man marries his mo. br. d., he receives no gifts from his mo. br., as his mo. br. in his capacity as the father of the bride would be eligible for the bride price. Such duties and responsibilities arising out of kinship are not restricted to the marriage function alone, but extend rather to every aspect of social life including childbirth, sickness at home, death, etc. Therefore, it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of the clan practices, the system of kinship and marriage amongst the Nagas for a proper understanding of any aspect of their social life.

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<sup>2</sup>The abbreviations used for the kinship terms: fa. = father, mo. = mother, sl. = sister, br. = brother, wl. = wife, hus. = husband, gr. = grand, d. = daughter.

A part of every kinship system affects the sexual relations of its members, in that it is a set of regulations which prohibit marriage or cohabitation between persons who stand in certain relationships and conversely approve or encourage the mating of others. These rules vary from one system to another, and in a given society, it may vary from one period to another. For instance, though most of the Naga communities prohibit marriage between a man and his stepmothers, the marriage with stepmothers is freely practiced amongst the Semas. The Tswana community in Africa, according to R. Brown (1950: 153) also marries their stepmothers. Even amongst the Semas, marriage between a man and his mo. sl. was prohibited, as both the mother and her sister including her uterine sister had the common nomenclature **aza**. Nowadays, in most parts of the Sema-speaking areas mo. is addressed as **aza**, and mo. sl. is **ani**, and the marriage between a man and his mo. sl. is permitted. Hutton (1968: 131) assumes this change to be a consequence of the recent transformation of the Semas' previous matriarchal system into a patrilineal patriarchal society where a man can marry any female relation on his mother's side. Since marriage is a form of mating in which a man and woman are socially and legally recognised as husband and wife and are subject to all the rights and duties of the woman's people (to receive the bride price) and of the man (to be the social and the legal father of the children the woman bears), the system of kinship can be looked upon as an arrangement which enables people to live together and cooperate with one another in an orderly social life. Beginning with the system observable among the Sema, it is proposed to discuss these features in the following paragraphs.

A rule of exogamy whereby a man is forbidden to take a wife from amongst the women of his own group (i.e., the same lineage, clan, sub-clan, etc.), is found in most societies. The rule of exogamy amongst the Semas prohibits marriages in the same generation between brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters amongst the Semas include not only the issue of the same parents but also the issue of all the brothers of the ego's father, which fits in with the classificatory system of Morgan's bifurcating merging system (Morgan: 1971). In the next descending generation mating is prohibited between the male ego and his daughters, including the daughters of his brothers. The marriage between a stepfather and a stepdaughter is also prohibited if the stepdaughter is brought up by the stepfather. In such a situation, marriage between stepbrothers and stepsisters is also prohibited. These are reflected in the kinship terms in Sema, for instance: in the same generation, **amu** and **afo** refer respectively to the elder brother/sister. Both these terms refer to the paternal parallel cousins and also to the stepbrothers/sisters living with the family. The younger brothers and sisters have different terms for the male/female ego, i.e., while the younger

sister for a male ego is **acepú**, she is **acinípú** for a female ego. The younger brother for a male ego is **acɛksɛ**, while he is **apeú** for a female ego. These four terms are equally applicable to the paternal parallel cousins and *the stepbrothers/sisters living with the ego*. In the next ascending generation, the mother is addressed as **aza** but the mo. sl. and fa. sl. are addressed as **anl** (a term used also for mother-in-law) and the father and all the brothers of the father as **apu** 'father.' In the next descending generation, the parents address their sons/daughters as **apú/ana** respectively. A man uses the same nomenclature to address his brother's children also. These relations are presented in Diagram 1.

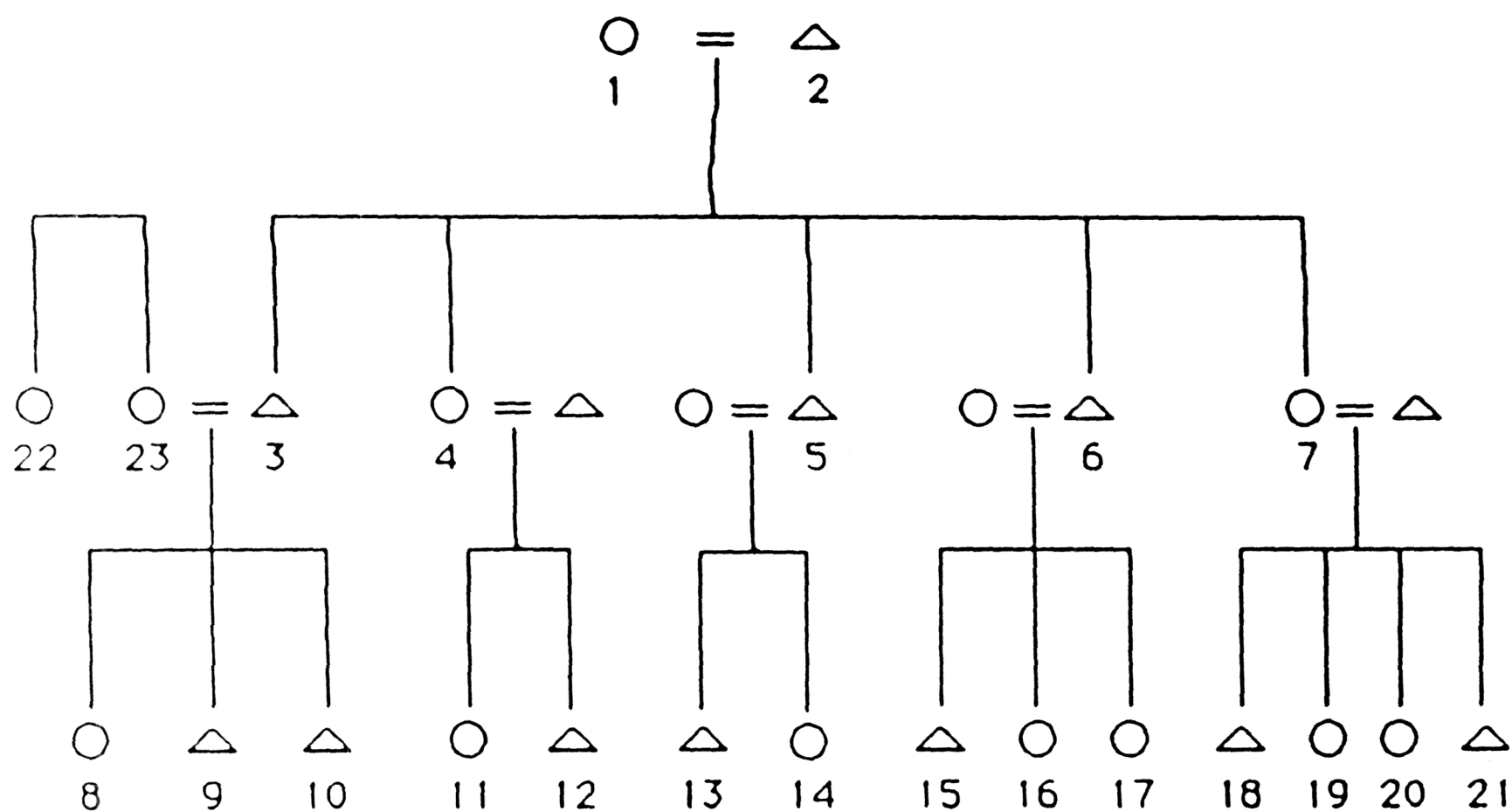


Diagram 1

In the diagram presented above, the persons from 8 to 21 would address 1 and 2 as **acɛksɛ** 'grandparents' and 3, 5, and 6 as **apu** 'father'. Conversely, 3, 5, and 6 would address everyone from 8 to 21 as **apú** 'son' or **ana** 'daughter.' Similarly all the males from 8 to 21 would address 4 and 7 as **anl**, a term used also for the mother-in-law, and the females would address them as **aza** 'mother.' While 9 and 10 would address 23 as **anl**, 8 would address her as **aza**. In the central region of the Sema-speaking areas, daughter's daughter is addressed as **ana** 'daughter' but in the other regions, she is addressed as **atiksyú** 'a mating partner.' We will presently discuss the possibility of sex relations or marriage between a man and his d. d. on the one side and a woman and her son's son on the other side.

If the rules of exogamy prohibit marriage between persons who stand in certain relationships, there are certain relations between whom marriage is not merely permitted but regarded as desirable. The term preferential marriage is commonly applied to customs of this kind and according to R. Brown (1950: 60) the commonest example of the preferred marriages are: cross-cousin marriage and marriage with wl. sl. or wl. br. d. In the Sema community also, these are the most preferred marriages, though marriages between other kin also take place, for instance: marriage between a male ego and his br. wl./fa. br. wl./stepmother, etc. The kinship terminology reflects these marriage patterns. What is, however, very pertinent in the case of the Sema community is the all-pervasiveness of the marriage pattern in the use of kinship terms to the extent of ignoring both the sex and the generation, i.e., whereas the mating partners would address each other by a single term, there would be no change in the nomenclature of the parents of the prospective mating partners after the marriage, for instance: the set of relations who enter into primary marriages address each other as **atiksyú** and the set of relations who enter into secondary unions address each other as **aci**. And each one of them both before and after the marriage addresses the prospective father-in-law/mother-in-law as **anu/ani**. The term **anu** refers to both the mo. br. and mo. br. son, since both could be the wl. fa. of a male ego. Similarly, br. wl. and fa. wl. are **atiksyú** as both are mating partners for a male ego. Beginning with the term **atiksyú**, it is proposed to discuss this all-pervasiveness of the marriage pattern over the kinship terms in Sema.

The term **atiksyú** refers to a number of relations. These are: fa. sl. son/d.; mo. br. son/d., mo. sl. son/d.; sl. son for a female ego; sl. d. for a male ego and d. d. Of these, only the first three show a perfect symmetry, as in:

(a)	fa. sl. son	<----->	mo. br. d.
(b)	mo. br. son	<----->	fa. sl. d.
(c)	mo. sl. son	<----->	mo. sl. d.
(d)	mo. sl.	<----->	sl. son
(e)	mo. br.	<----->	sl. d.
(f)	mo. fa.	<----->	d. d.

Not only are some of these relations paired, but the kinship terms for their relations-in-law also show a neat pattern, for instance: the term **ani** stands for both wl. mo. and hus. mo.; and the wl. mo. for a, b and c are respectively his mo. br. wl., fa. sl., and mo. sl. He addresses all of them before and after his marriage with his counterparts in the pair as **ani**. Conversely the hus. mo. of a, b and c are respectively her fa. sl.; mo. br. wl.



and mo. sl., and all these relations are addressed as **ani** both before and after her marriage, as in Diagram 2:

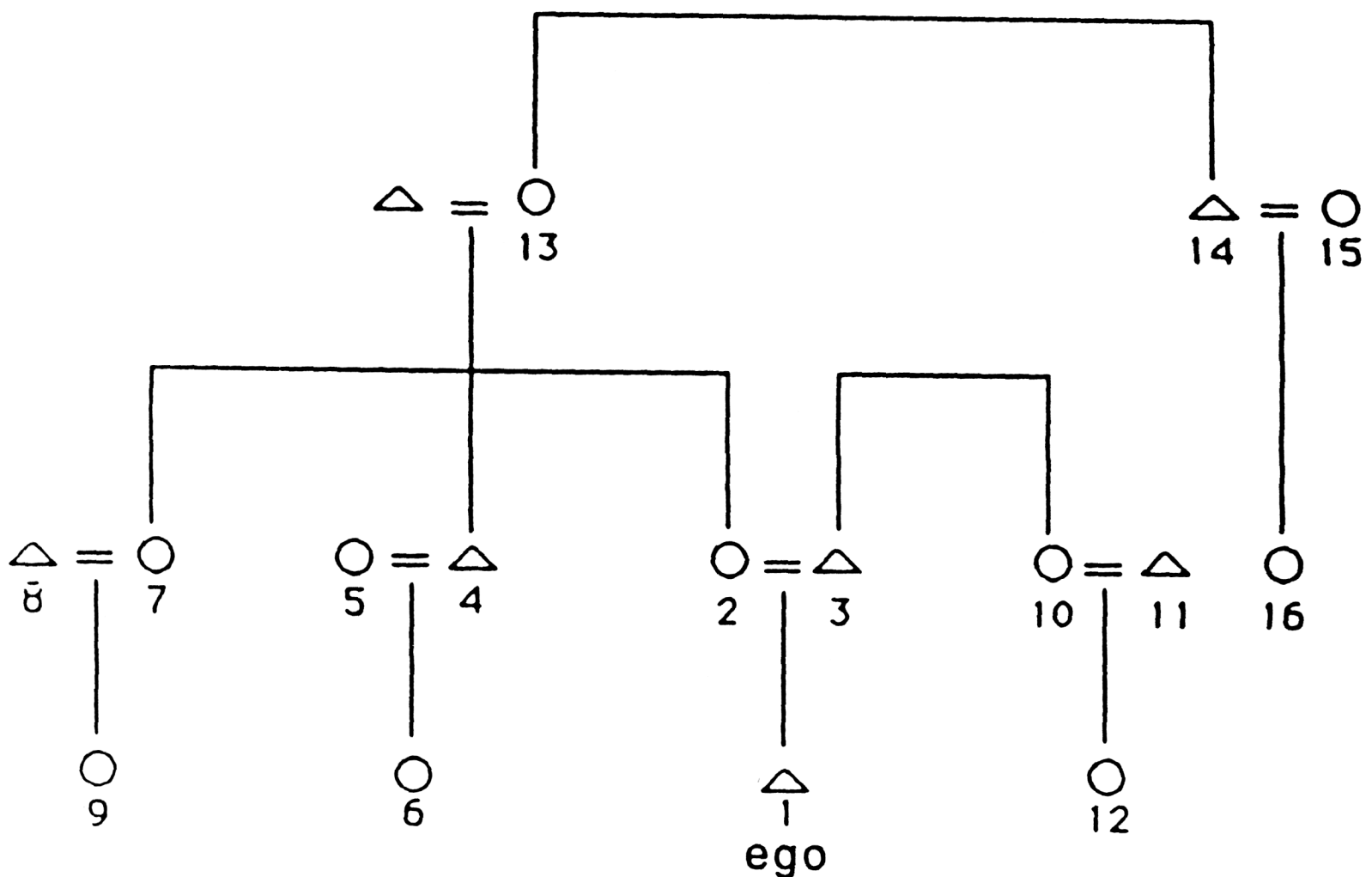


Diagram 2

When 1 and 6 marry, 4 and 5 (in addition to being respectively the ego's mo. br. and mo. br. wi.) also become his wife's parents. Conversely 2 and 3 (in addition to being the fa. sl. and fa. sl. hus. to 6) also becomes her hus. parents. If this pattern becomes institutionalized in the second generation, mo. br., fa. sl. hus., and wi. fa. would all be combined into one and the same person. There would also be a similar combination of the relationships of fa. sl., mo. br. wi., and wi. mo., with the nomenclature for all these relations being: **anu** for the males and **ani** for the females (compare Rivers, 1914: 20-22). The marriage between 1 and 12 is just the reverse of the marriage between 1 and 6, and the consequences of such a marriage on the kinship terms are exactly identical to that obtaining between 1 and 6. The male ego could also marry 16 (mo. mo. br. d.). This is just another variety of cross-cousin marriage wherein the spouse belongs to another generation. As a consequence of such a marriage, both 1 and 2 would address 15 as **ani**. For 1, she (15) is just his wi. mo.; whereas for 2, she (15) is both son. wi. mo. and mo. br. wi., and the term for all these relations is also **ani**. But when the ego marries 7, the kinship does not show a complete all round correlation, in that while he cannot marry 10 (fa. sl.) he

could marry 7 (mo. sl.). Furthermore, since mo. sl. hus. is a potential husband of his mother and therefore a potential father to him, he addresses 8 (mo. sl. hus.) as **apu** 'father' and not **anu** 'father-in-law.' The nomenclature **atiksyú** is used also to refer to one's sl. son and sl. d. The male ego (1) addresses his sl. d. (9) as **atiksyú** 'mating partner' but to her the ego is **anu** 'mo. br.' or 'fa.-in-law' and not a mating partner. Similarly, the female ego (7) addresses her sl. son (1) as **atiksyú** but to him she is **a za/aní** 'mother/aunt' and not a mating partner, even though marriages between a male ego and his mo. sl./sl. d. do take place these days. This lacuna in the kinship terms clearly gives a clue to the possibility that the marriage of a man with his mo. sl., mo. sl. d. or sl. d. is a late innovation, particularly because in the Central Sema area not only is the marriage between a man and his mo. sl. prohibited but both the mo. and mo. sl. have the same nomenclature, viz., **a za**. A further piece of evidence for this is the existence of an earlier kinship term **akitú** referring to both sl. son/d. The suspicion of Hutton (1968: 131) that the Semas originally belonged to a matriarchal social system, and that the changeover to the patriarchal system was a comparatively recent one, is strengthened by this clue. Thus though the cross-cousins and maternal parallel cousins have the same nomenclature and may intermarry, the nomenclature for the relations-in-law fits only when the cross-cousins marry and not in a marriage between maternal parallel cousins.

Yet another series of neat pairs of mating partners are found between persons who use the term **aci** to address each other, as in:

- |     |                  |         |              |
|-----|------------------|---------|--------------|
| (g) | br. wl.          | <-----> | hus. br.     |
| (h) | wl. sl.          | <-----> | sl. hus.     |
| (i) | fa. br. wl.      | <-----> | hus. br. son |
| (j) | mo. br. wl.      | <-----> | hus. sl. son |
|     | (if not fa. sl.) |         |              |
| (k) | wl. br. d.       | <-----> | fa. sl. hus. |

Here again the importance of the marriage practice over the kinship terms is very evident in that the persons involved address each other as **aci**, ignoring both sex and generation. Thus, while g and h are instances of marriage in the same generation, i and j are instances of marriage in the next ascending generation for the male ego and the next descending generation for the female ego; for a male ego k is a marriage in the next descending generation while the same for a female ego is one in the next ascending generation. This is reflected also in the kinship terms for the fathers/mothers-in-law which ignore the generation, e.g., both the hus. br./fa. are **anu** for the female ego, as both could be fa.-in-law to her.

Similarly, since a female ego could marry her hus. sl. son, to her, hus. sl. is **ani** 'mo.-in-law' and hus. sl. hus. is **anu** 'fa.-in-law.' Diagram 3 clarifies these points:

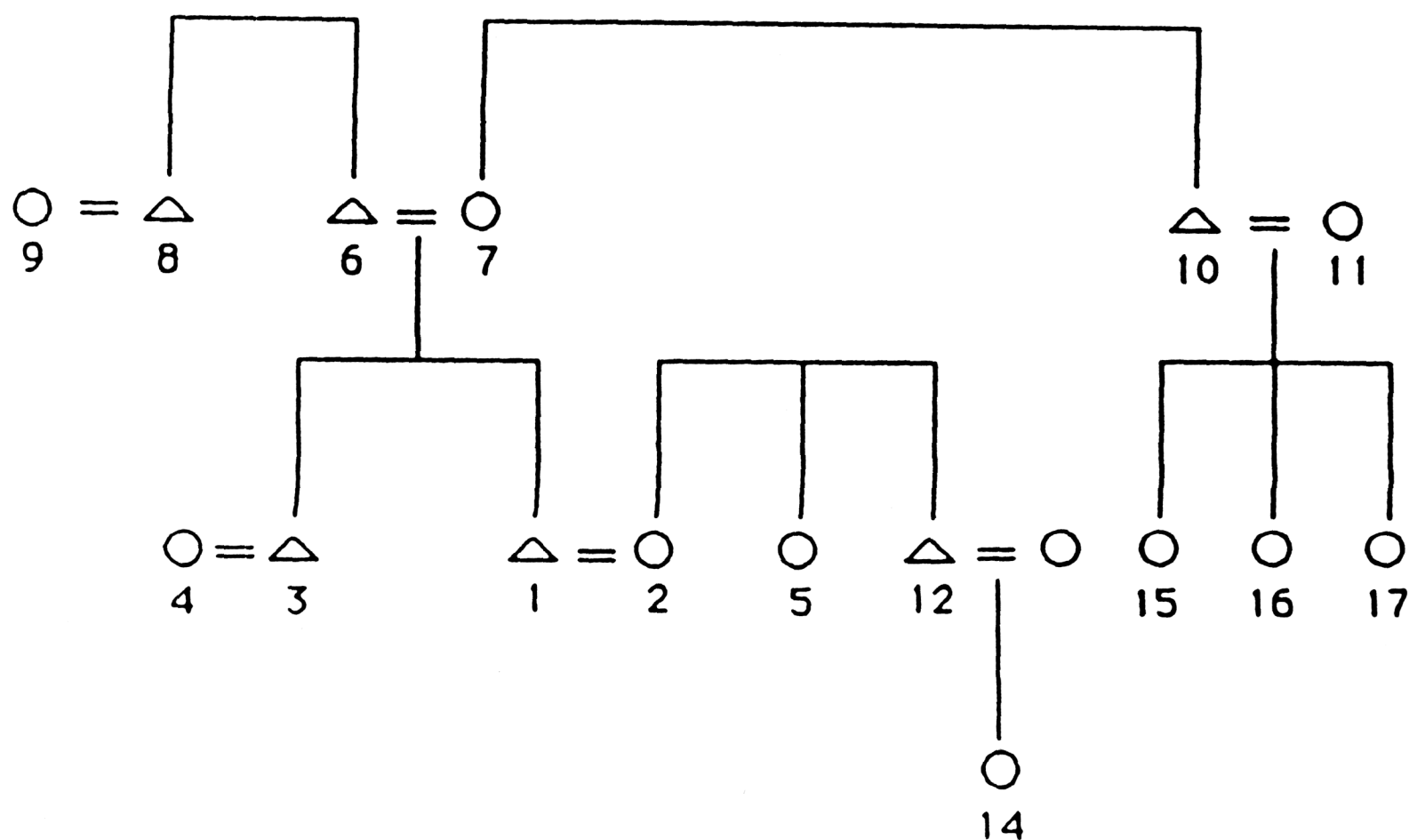


Diagram 3

The male ego in the diagram could marry 4 (br. wl.), 5 (wl. sl.), 9 (fa. br. wl.), 11 (mo. br. wl.), 14 (wl. br. d.) and also 15 (mo. br. d.). The marriage between 1 and 15 was discussed earlier. Presently it is proposed to discuss ego's marriage with the other relatives and the implications of such a marriage for the kinship terms. We begin with the marriage between 1 and 9.

(i) *The marriage with 9 (fa. br. wl.) and also with the stepmother*

The term for the hus. br. wl. is **anipa**. When 1 and 9 get married, 7 who was **anipa** to 9 before her marriage with 1 now becomes her **ani** 'hus. mo.' However, the children of 8 and 9 would not address 1 (her second husband) as **apu** 'father,' since they were brothers to him; and her parents-in-law by the first husband now become her grandparents-in-law. All these changes take place despite the fact that prior to the new marriage 1 and 9 addressed each other as **aci** 'mating partners.' A similar anomaly is seen when a man marries his stepmother. The kinship terms just fail to suit these two types of marriages which take place very frequently amongst the

Semas. Such marriages seem not to be an integral part of their social system. Therefore, for an explanation of the prevalence of this system, we must look elsewhere, viz., to the principle of equivalence of siblings (Meyer, 1949: 215) or to economic necessity (ibid., pp. 15-16). Since a few other types of marriages also come under this category, they are all discussed together below.

(ii) *The marriage with 11 (mo. br. wi.)*

The marriage between 1 and 11 shows only a partial correlation in the use of the kinship terms, in that 7 would be both deceased hus. sl. and the present hus. mo., and the term for both these relations is *anl*, but 1 is neither *apu* 'father' for 15, nor are 15 and her sibs *apú/aña* son/d. for 1. Rather they address each other by the term *atiksýú* 'mating partners.' If such a marriage is preferred and as such institutionalized, the kinship for the other relations ought to fit in with such a marriage. Thus, in the Bank Islands, where marriage with one's mo. br. wi. persisted (Rivers, 1914: 28), 'a man applies to his mo. br. children the term which he otherwise uses for his own children and conversely, a person applies to his fa. sl. son a term he otherwise uses for his father. In Pentecost also, where a man married his mo. br. wi., the paternal cross-cousins were treated on a par with their own father (Rivers, 1914: 32).

(iii) *The marriage with 4 (br. wi.)*

The marriage between 1 and 4 would not lead to any additional relationship to 4 as the ego's parents were already parents-in-law to her and the ego's children were *apú/aña* 'son/d.' to her; conversely for the ego's daughter she was *aza* 'mo.' though to his sons she was *aci* 'mating partner' but is now *aza* 'mo.' The ego was already *apu* 'fa.' to the children of 4 by 3. Both the wives of two or more brothers as well as the co-wives of a person use the same term to address each other, viz., *anipa*. Thus this secondary union shows a nearly complete correlation with the kinship terms. This implies that this type of secondary union is an institutionalized one.

(iv) *The marriage with 5 (wi. sl.)*

When ego marries 5, no new relations are established for him, since the parents of 5 were already his parents-in-law. The only change that would seem to occur is that 2 (who was *afo* 'elder sl.' to 5) now becomes *anipa*, and the sons of 2 would now address her as *aza* instead of *anl*, while she was already *aza* to the daughters of 2. This secondary union also seems to be an institutionalized one.

(v) *The marriage with 14 (wi. br. d.)*

Before the marriage of the ego with 14, 12 was only wl. br. to the ego; after his marriage with 14, he also becomes wl. fa., but the term for both wl. bro and wl. fa. is **anu**. However, 2 who was **ani** (fa. sl.) to 14 now becomes her **anipa** 'co-wife.' Other than this, there is no disturbance or disharmony in the kinship terms as a consequence of this union.

We are now left with the use of the kinship term **atiksyú** 'mating partner' to refer to two relations between whom marriage is not permissible, i.e., the use of the term **atiksyú** to refer to gr. d./son. Even though a Sema man may not marry his gr. mo., one could visualize such a mating which is illustrated with the help of Diagram 4.

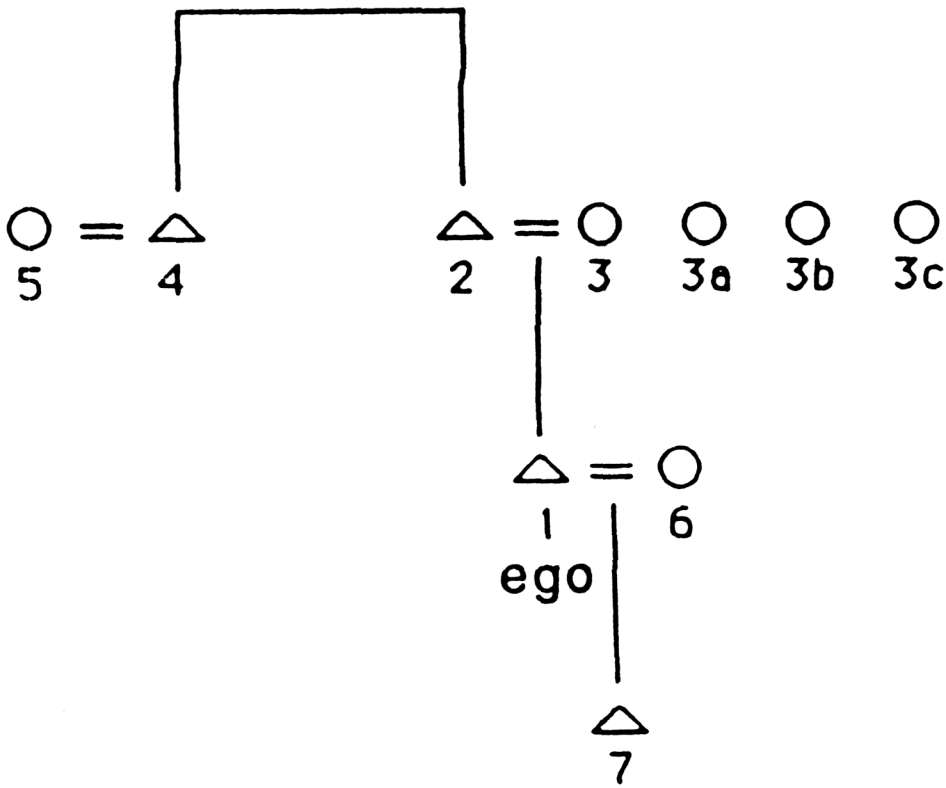


Diagram 4

According to past and present custom, ego (1) could marry 5, 3a, 3b, 3c, etc. (3a, 3b, 3c, etc. are his stepmothers). No. 7 in his turn inherits all the wives of his father (1) except for his own mother. If ego (1) dies shortly after marrying 5 and a few others, 7 has the right to marry all of them. In such an event the marriage of 7 with 5, 3a, 3b, 3c, etc. would be a marriage between a man and his gr. mo. The possibility of such a marriage taking place is very remote as the brothers including the paternal parallel cousins of the ego (1) would normally take over the widows of 1. But a marriage between a Sema man and his gr. d. is completely inconceivable. For one thing, not only his own children, but the children of his brothers are considered his children and any sex relations with one's daughter is incestuous. However, when we combine the primary marriage of an ego



with the secondary union of the ego's father, the dismal possibility of such a marriage exists. For instance, the Sema community permits marriage not only between a man and his widowed stepmothers, but also with the widowed daughter-in-law. Hence if a man marries his sl. d. and dies shortly after, his father could step into his son's shoes and take over to himself his son's widowed wife. In such an event that would be a union between a man and his granddaughter. Even here what is in doubt is the authenticity of the marriage between a man and his sl. d. in the past. Diagram 5 clarifies this possibility.

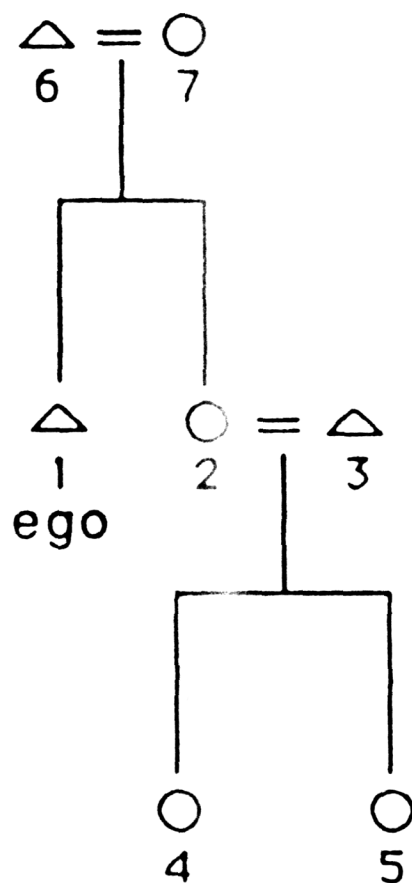


Diagram 5

The ego (1) could marry both 4 and 5. If the ego dies shortly after his marriage. In the absence of any brothers or grown-up sons, his father (6) could enter into a secondary union with his son's widowed wife, which then would be a union between a man and his granddaughter. There was very little chance of such a union taking place in the case of the Semas, though marriages between a man and his br. d. d. has been reported from Pentecost (Rivers, 1914: 36), the Buin community on the Island of Bougainville and the Fiji Islands (Rivers, 1914: 40-41), the Trobriand Islands in British New Guinea (Seligmann, 1910: 707), etc. Further, according to Barnes (1971: 220-221) 'a widow amongst the Tallansi may be inherited by a man classified as her dead hus. br. or gr. son in a linked clan, or his sl. son in some other clan.' What is pertinent to note here is that in all instances where the marriage between a man and his d.d. is institutionalized a number of other related kinship terms get merged, for instance: mo. wl. with d.; children of d. with br./sl.; mo. mo. with elder sister; and fa. fa. with elder brother, etc.

Since such a merger of the kinship terms did not take place in the case of the Semas, the possibility of a man marrying his d. d. must be ruled out altogether.

We could also view such a marriage from another aspect, viz., on structural principles. Thus, R. Brown (1950: 29-30) speaks of the merging of the alternate generations whereby the two generations are regarded as being in a relation not of superordination and subordination, but of simple friendliness and solidarity and something approaching social equality. The use of a term meaning 'mating partner' for a granddaughter must not be assumed to imply the existence of a custom of marriage with a granddaughter either in the present or in the past. But once the granddaughter and the grandmother have been included in one's own generation by this merging of the alternate generation, the possibility of marriage suggests itself. Even such a possibility has to be ruled out in the case of the Semas, primarily because of the presence of just one single term to indicate the equivalence of the alternate generation.

After having seen the totality of the marriages that are possible between two related persons amongst the Semas, we also find that only two sets of kinship terms show a complete match for the mating partners. These are **atiksyú** and **ací**. Of these, the mating partners who use the term **ací** enter into secondary unions like levirate, sororate and avuncular marriages. Of the mating partners who use the term **atiksyú**, the marriages between maternal parallel cousins do not show as neat a correlation in the kinship system as the ones between cross-cousins, which implies that cross-cousin marriage is the most preferred type amongst the Semas. In another study (Sreedhar: 1978), it was found that cross-cousin marriage is the most preferred marriage amongst the Dravidians, though of late some have resorted to marriage with a man's sl. d. Lévi-Strauss (1969: 120) claims that cross-cousin marriage is the most preferred union in contrast to the levirate, sororate and avuncular marriages primarily because it is impossible to have a marriage system in which all marriages are leviratic or to a dead wife's sister. Marriages of this kind occur only along with marriages of other kinds, for a marriage with a dead wife entails a previous marriage of another kind. Josselin de Jong (1952: 12) explains these privileged marriages as the transfer of rights from one individual to another. Fortes Meyer (1949: 224-225 and 1945: 52) explains this transfer of rights under the two principles of equivalence of siblings and equivalence of alternate generation. In accordance with the first principle, a brother of the dead husband is equated with the dead man himself and hence he inherits the widow. Any woman might have been a man but for the accident of birth. Had she been a 'man,' she would have had the right to inherit the widow of

her dead brother; because she is actually a woman, she cannot exercise these rights herself but they are exercised for her by her son, who is sister's son to the dead man. The inheritance by a grandson is explained by the principle of equivalences of alternate generations (also compare R. Brown, 1950: 29-30). While discussing the system of a male marrying his wl. br. d., R. Brown (1950: 124) also sets up another hypothesis and claims that 'the crux of Nyakyusa ideas of marriage is that the relations between affines are ideally permanent. A divorce should never occur. A dead husband should be replaced by his heir, a dead wife by her younger sister or brother's sister. The individuals concerned may change but the relationship between the families remains.' The purpose of such secondary unions is sometimes religious, for instance the practice of levirate marriage by the ancient Hebrews and the Vedic Aryans. 'On the death of a man without issue, it was his brother's duty to cohabit with the widow in order to raise children, which were counted not as his children but as the children of the deceased.'

It might be fruitful to look at the secondary unions practiced by the Semas in the light of these different opinions/functions. The levirate, sororate and avuncular marriages were considered as a transfer of rights under different principles, as a system of retaining permanency of relationship between families, and also as a way to fulfill the religious function of procreation for a dead man. But as far as the Semas are concerned, there is much more here than meets the eye. Since divorces do take place amongst the Semas and one may also marry a widow with male issue, secondary unions are certainly not resorted to either to retain any permanency of family relations or for any religious purpose; rather the economic factor seems to be the paramount one. For one thing, the Semas pay the highest bride price of any Naga group, and when an eligible groom is unable to pay the bride price, he offers to live in the house of the prospective father-in-law and serves him for 2-3 years before he is allowed to marry. This period is treated as a period of probation for the groom, since if the prospective in-law is displeased with his work or behavior the groom could be asked to go away. The groom is also strictly prohibited from having any sex relations with his prospective wife before marriage, since the bride price of a Sema girl goes down by half if she is suspected of having had any pre-marital relations. Therefore, the Sema parents guard the virginity of their daughters very jealously. This is quite like the attitude of the other Naga communities towards pre-marital relations. Thus when a man marries the widow of a kinsman, in addition to strengthening the existing bond, he also saves a lot of money on the bride price. Similarly when one marries the daughter of a near kin, the bride price is drastically reduced. The reverse situation to this is found in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka (South India) where a girl marries her maternal uncle to avoid the payment

of a huge dowry. Secondly, when a husband dies, the widows of the dead man are free to take their share of the movable properties and return to their parents' house. In a society that practices polygyny, if all the widows take away their individual shares of the movable properties, the household of the dead man would go bankrupt. This would also deprive the living ones of the free labor of the widows of the dead man. Thus it is these economic considerations that prompt a Sema man to enter into polygynous marriages with the widows of his brother/father and sometimes even with the widow of his own son. The prime motive for inbreeding at the time of the primary marriages is also an economic one. From all these considerations, it is evident that the system of marriage bonds amongst the Semas is basically a part of the economic system, and the kinship terms used in the Sema community are based almost entirely on the system of marriage to the exclusion of any other consideration like clan, sub-clan, generation or even sex. In sharp distinction to this, the kinship system of the Aos, who are the next door neighbours of the Semas in Nagaland, is woven almost exclusively around clan practices. The following paragraphs will discuss the kinship system observable amongst the Aos.

In the case of the Aos, Morgan's classificatory system applies neatly to the kinship terms. In fact, the classificatory system is extended much beyond its limits so as to apply to all persons belonging to one's clan. Thus a man considers all men of his clan as his kinsmen whether or not he is actually related to them, and then categorizes his fellow clanspeople according to generation, i.e., all men of his father's generation are classed along with his father, all men/women of his own generation into sibling clans, and the children of his sibling class into the son/daughter category. In addition, all the women of his mother's generation (both of his own and his mother's clan) are included in the mother category. This type of categorization is applicable even to affinal relations, i.e., wife's sister's daughter for a male and husband's brother's daughter and husband's sister's daughter for a female are also classed along with one's daughter. Similarly, the terms *oya/tunu* 'elder/younger sister' is extended to relatives like *mo. sl. d.*, *hus. br. wl.*, *hus. sl. d.*, and *wl. br. wl.*, provided they belong to the ego's clan or can be traced through the female line to the ego's clan; otherwise they are classed with the mother and addressed as *uca tanuzû/uca tanzû* 'elder/younger mother.' As a consequence of using a single term to refer to a number of kinsfolk/clansmen, the total number of kinship terms available to the community is also limited. Yet one finds that depending upon the clan to which a person belongs, a single affinal relative would have two or three kinship terms. This can be illustrated with the help of a diagram showing the use of the kinship term *anu* for different affinal relations.

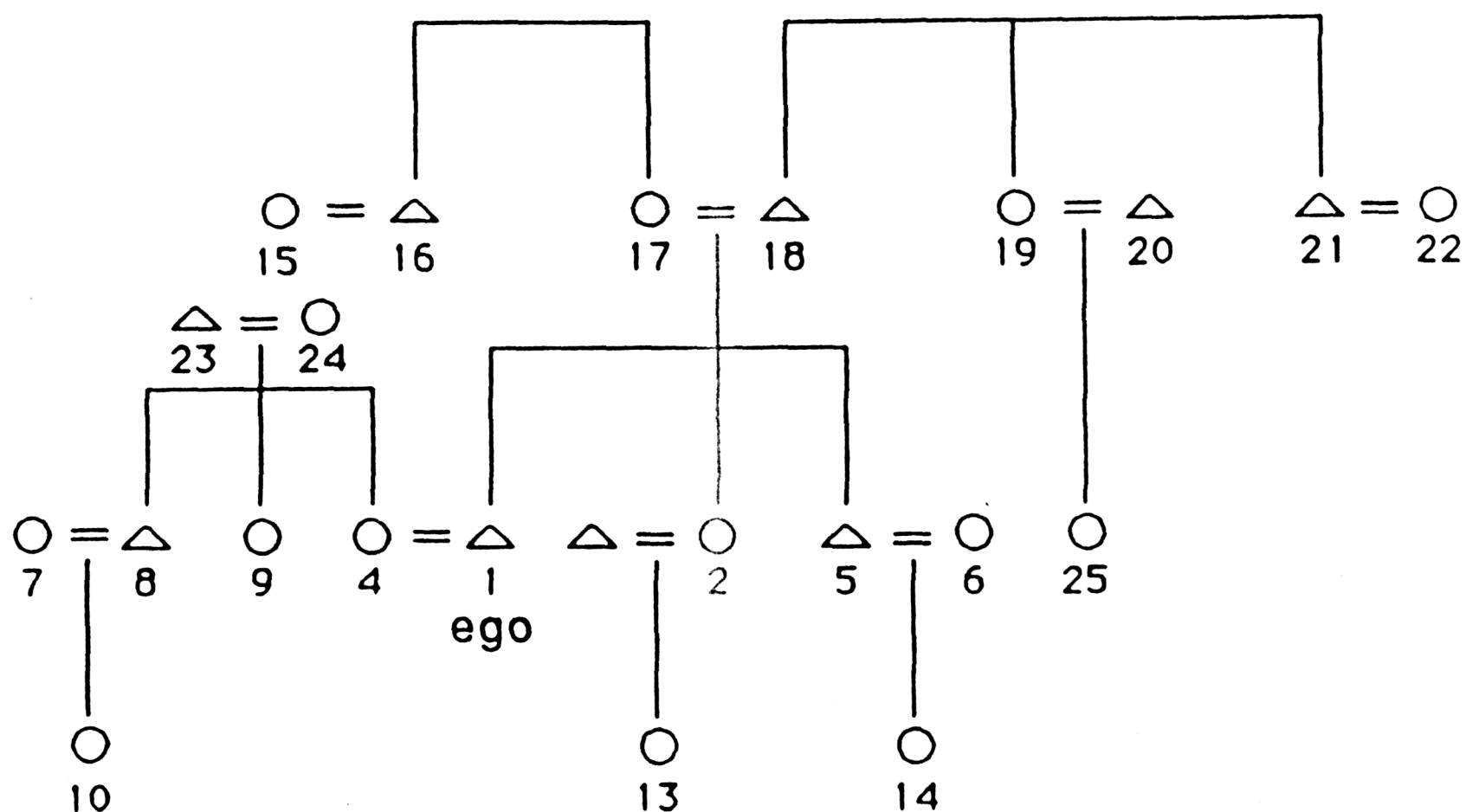


Diagram 6

The term **amu** on the ego's wife's side refers to his wl. sl. (9), wl. mo. (24), wl. br. wl. (7) and wl. br. d. (10). Others who are referred to by this term include: sl. d. (13), br. wl. (16), br. d. (14), mo. br. wl. (15), fa. br. wl. (22) and fa. sl. d. (25). However, depending upon the clan to which each of them belongs, all these relations could also be primarily grouped into three: (a) These kin who could trace their pedigree to his own clan through the female line, failing which they would be equated with mother. (b) Those kin who belong to the mother's clan. Under this class come wl. sl. (also a potential mate) and some other affinal relations like hus. br. wl., wl. br. wl., wl. br. d., who are addressed as **amu** if they do not belong to the clan of ego or his/her mother. (c) If they belong to his own clan or his mother's, they are equated respectively with his elder/younger sister or elder/younger mother.

The male counterpart of **amu** is **oku**. Here also the same pattern is found, in that the kinship terms used for a relative depend upon the clan to which the relative belongs. This pattern is seen throughout the kinship terms of the Aos. We must now have a look at the Ao exogamous groups.



The Ao community is divided into eight clans: Urukamir, Ponganmar, Yamsunga, Ayer, Jamir, Longcar, Longkamir and Lomthar. These clans are divided into three exogamous sub-groups: These groups are:

- (i) Urukamir, Ponganmar, Yamsunga, Ayer
- (ii) Jamir, Longcar
- (iii) Longkamir, Lomthar

Marriage within each group even outside one's clan is strictly prohibited, as each sub-group consisting of two or more clans is an exogamous group. Even intra-group flirting is prohibited. Therefore, a person from sub-group 1 may select his/her mating partner from sub-group 2 or 3, one from sub-group 2 may select from 1 or 3, and so on. A person, whether male or female, invariably belongs to the clan of his/her father. For facilitating the identity of the clan to which an individual belongs, the clan name is usually suffixed to the personal name. The order in which the different parts of the name of a person occurs is: the initials of the father, personal name of the ego and the clan name. Thus, P. Thongpang Jamir and K. Tali Ayer are the full names of the two informants with whom the author has worked. P and K are the initials of their respective fathers, Thongpang and Tali are the personal names of the informants, and Jamir and Ayer are the clans to which they belonged.

We have seen earlier that depending upon whether he/she belongs to the ego's clan, his mother's clan or to any other clan, the same relative is addressed by different kinship terms. When a person belongs to a clan other than his own or his mother's, in most cases the neutral term **anok** is used, whereas the term **amu/oku** is more endearing. The term **anok** can be used to refer to almost all the female relations except those who are considered very intimate relations like *wi. mo.*, *wi. si.* (a potential mate), etc.

Since an individual belongs to his/her father's clan, a mating partner from his mother's clan is always preferred, failing which the partner is sought from his grandmother's clan or even from amongst the persons who can trace their pedigree through their mother's line to his clan. This results in a number of relations being combined into one person. Thus, *mo.*, *mo.*, *wi. mo.*, and *mo. br. wi.* could all be combined into a single person. Therefore, the kinship term for all these relations is **otsu**. See Diagram 7.

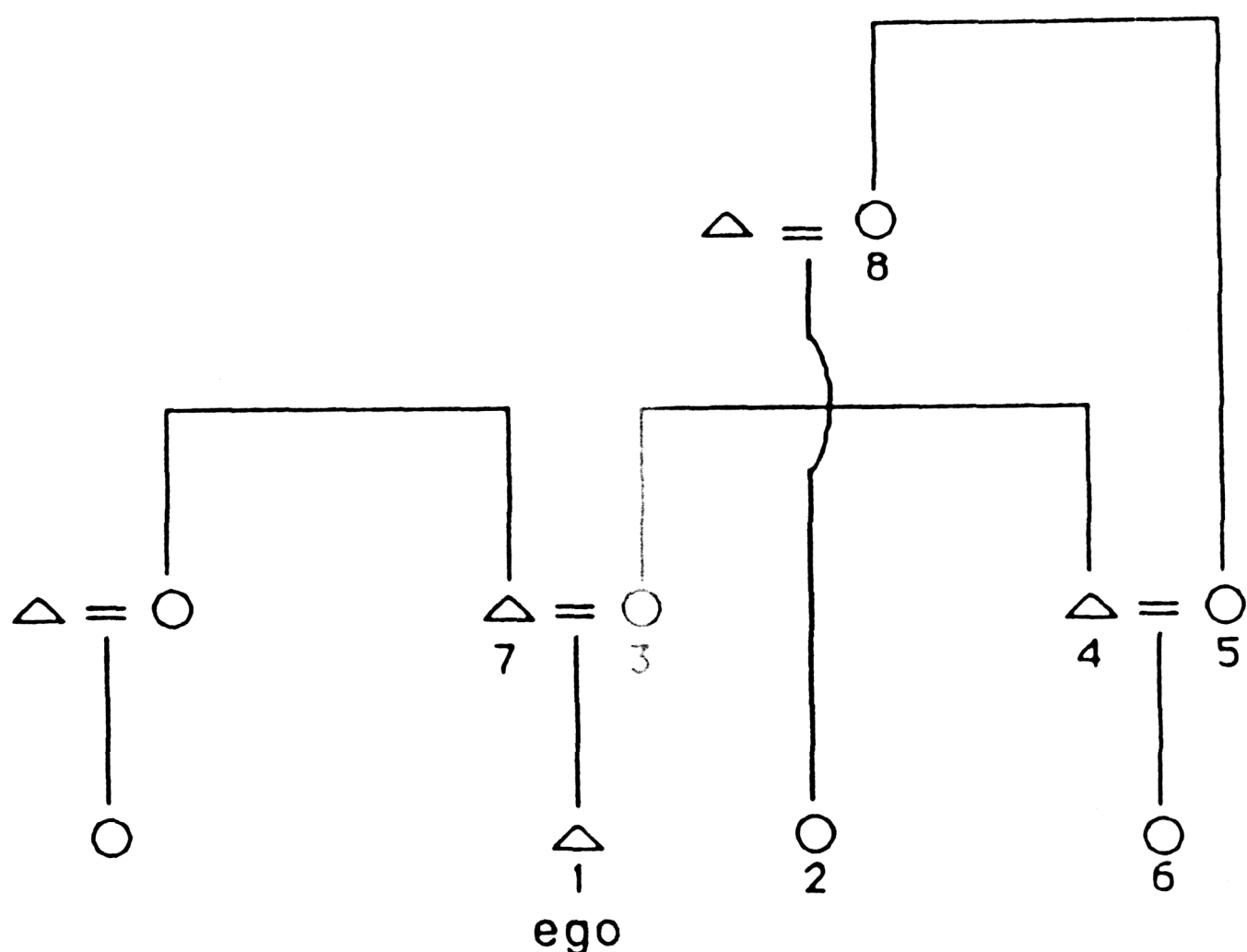


Diagram 7

If ego (1) marries 2 who is his mo. sl., his wl. mo. and mo. mo. would be combined into 6. Similarly, if his mo. br. (4) in his turn marries 5, who is his mo. sl., the ego's mo. br. wl. and mo. mo. would also be combined into one person. In all these instances, the term *otsu* is used, if they belonged to his gr. mo. clan; otherwise they are classed with his own mo. Thus the clan practice has an overriding influence in the system of both marriage and kinship amongst the Aos. This is in striking contrast to the picture found among the Semas, their next door neighbours, whose kinship terminology is determined almost exclusively by their marriage practices, with the clan system having hardly any role to play.

In conclusion, it might be stated that even though both the Semas and Aos call themselves Nagas and live in contiguous areas in Nagaland, the kinship terms in the two communities are based primarily on two different criteria, viz., the clan practices with the Aos and the marriage practices with the Semas. If any attempt is made to classify their kinship terms, both of them fall under the bifurcating merging sub-system of Morgan (1871). But where Morgan went wrong is in his association of bifurcate merging terminology with non-sororal polygyny, whereas the Nagas practice all of the three known types of polygyny, viz., levirate, sororate and avuncular.

As far as the classification of Murdock (1949) based on the groupings of siblings and parallel cousins is concerned, none of the six types (viz., Eskimo, Hawaiian, Iroquois, Sudanese, Omaha and Crow) gibes with the structure of Sema kinship. The shortcoming of the classification of Murdock (1949: 223-224) lies in his failure to account for the possibility of split within the parallel cousins. In Sema kinship, parallel cousins are split up into maternal parallel cousins and paternal parallel cousins; while the paternal parallel cousins are merged with the siblings, the maternal parallel cousins are merged with the cross-cousins. Such a simultaneous split and merger was probably not known to Murdock when he set up his structural types.

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