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## Unilateral Kindred : A Reconsideration in East Asian Societies

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## Unilateral Kindred: A Reconsideration in East Asian Societies

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Over two decades have passed since Robin Fox [1967] proposed that the concept of kindred should be extended to cover cases in which members of a kin group are recruited unilaterally. Elsewhere I have pointed to the feasibility of applying this concept to Korean kinship [Yi and Suenari 1973; Suenari 1975], and Shima Mutsuhiko [1976] later demonstrated its importance in detail in analyzing his own Korean data. However, there seems to have been no further development along this line. In the present paper, the importance of the concept of unilateral kindred will be reemphasized for the following reasons:

1. It is a very useful tool for understanding the present Korean kinship system.
2. It can be effectively applied in other Asian societies. The Vietnamese case shows the utility of this concept even more clearly than the Korean case. In the case of the Chinese kinship system, the unilateral kindred model points out some aspects that have been neglected because of anthropologists' concentration on lineages.
3. The model contributes to the general study of kinship, since the concept of kindred is still relatively undeveloped compared with that of descent.
4. The concept is useful in analyzing the historical processes in which kindred has played an important role. It is possible that unilateral kindred existed before the emergence of lineages of the present Chinese type. Furthermore, patrilineal kindreds may have been the basis for the formation of the Vietnamese patrilineal system.

### Kindred and Descent Group

East Asian kinship systems have been analyzed primarily in terms of unilineal descent groups.<sup>1)</sup> In order to understand these systems fully, however, we need to define a new analytical concept for a category of people who are related to an individual unilaterally. We might extend the concept of kindred, originally devised to denote a cognatic category, and define a subtype that can be called "unilateral kindred."

### *Development of the Concept of Kindred*

Freeman [1961] defined the concept of "kindred" in bilateral societies very clearly. His definition is in line with the notion of "all of an individual's cognates" that jurists and the majority of anthropologists have used to define this term

[Freeman 1961:200]. His main points can be summarized as follows:

1. A kindred is a category centered on ego.
2. The range of a kindred is counted by the degree of cousinship (first cousin, second cousin, and so on), by genealogical distance from ego, or sometimes by the number of cognatic stocks ego recognizes.
3. The respective kindreds of different individuals overlap, since relations are traced bilaterally.
4. A special morality in which members support one another is the basis of kindred solidarity.
5. A kindred sometimes constitutes a unit of marriage inhibition.
6. A kindred itself is not an action group, but it may provide a basis for forming such a group.

Though Freeman's definition cleared up much confusion with respect to the concept of kindred, there is still room for further refinement. First of all, he defined kindred solely as a bilateral category. Theoretically, however, we may also think of ego-centered categories organized on a unilateral principle. Just as there are unilineal as well as cognatic descent groups, the concept of kindred need not be limited to cognatic categories.<sup>2)</sup>

Second, Freeman defined kindred as a category that contrasted with descent groups. However, under certain conditions a kindred might form an action group, while people sharing common descent might lack any organization. The crucial distinction is that the focus of kindred is an ego while that of a descent group is an ancestor. This gives the kindred its fluid character, in which the range of members is reshuffled at every generation. This point will be discussed in the next section.

We should not expect that kindred occur only where there are no descent groups, whether we use the term kindred in a conventional sense referring to bilateral kinship or in a wider sense including unilateral kinship as well. Fox [1967:169-171] proposed applying the concept of kindred to the case of Kalmuk Mongols, each of whom has a personal kindred consisting of all the people related to ego through males within a fixed degree. He emphasized that the crucial point is to have an ego as the point of reference. Even if a patrilineal kindred looks like a lineage, membership is not determined by descent from a common ancestor but in terms of relationship to an ego.

### *Kindred as a Category and an Action Group*

When a certain category of close relatives forms an action group, it may appear to be little different from a minimal segment of a descent group. However, the concept of kindred stresses the recognition of close genealogical distance between individuals and ego, while the concept of lineage stresses the aspect as a corporate entity. Theoretically, we might propose that a lineage segment at any level of genealogical depth constitutes a category, but it would remain just a putative category if it had no corporate function. A lineage or its segment is substantiated

only when it has some functions. On the other hand, the cohesiveness of kindred lies in the genealogical relationship itself. Members of a kindred share the patterned cultural values and behavior associated with close genealogical relations, such as those between father and son or between siblings.

### *Distinctive Features of Unilateral Kindred*

There are two ways of reckoning the range of a unilateral kindred. One is to count the distance according to Roman law, and the other is by canon law. One may be tempted to view kindred as a stock from an ancestor a certain number of generations up from ego. Viewed this way, it is difficult to make a morphological distinction between a unilateral kindred and a low-level segment of a descent group. In spite of the morphological similarities, however, there is a qualitative difference in the respective sources of their solidarity. The feeling of closeness shared by the members of a kindred is based on a genealogical relation between ego and alter, while descent group solidarity is based on the feeling of shared membership in the same corporate group. Although unilateral kindred differs from bilateral kindred in many respects, both categories of people centered on an ego and including different degrees of kin. Let us examine these contrasting features of unilateral and bilateral kindred in ethnographic cases.

## **The Korean Case**

### *Descent System and Kindred*

Korea is famous for its full-fledged patrilineal descent system. Though a shared surname alone rarely creates a sense of solidarity, as it sometimes does in China, a surname does generate a feeling of solidarity when the people who share it also share the same clan seat (*pon'gwan*, place of origin). Those who possess both the same surname and the same *pon'gwan* form an exogamous unit.

Among such descent groups, the depth of genealogy traced from an apical ancestor is considerable, often covering more than thirty generations. A written genealogy (*chokpo*) is supposed to include all the patrilineal descendants of an apical ancestor, although it actually covers a very limited number of such descendants. More often, a genealogy focuses on a branch ancestor of later generations who was famous or an ancestor who was the first immigrant to the locality where many present descendants live.

A Korean patrilineage, called a *munjung*, is a corporate group formed for common activities of various kinds. Its name is derived from the branch founder or a place name associated with a particular ancestor. It owns common property in land and buildings in order to commemorate its ancestors. The *munjung* is the unit that carries out ancestral rituals. It has a leader and managers, and members meet regularly to celebrate the ritual of its founder and to discuss lineage matters.

Along with such a lineage, but separate from it, there is a distinct category of close patrilineal relatives. This unit is called a *tangnae* or *chiban*. Its members

use *ch'on* (literally, a unit of length) to express the genealogical distance between an ego and the others, and this centrality of ego in reckoning genealogical distance is a distinct feature of kindred.

The system of Korean mourning dress is another cultural device that shows the existence of a category of the kindred type, imported from China. Different dress is worn according to the grades of closeness to the deceased. Closeness is counted in the same way as the *ch'on* reckoning of distance among kindred.

### *Kindred and Action Group*

The mobilization of patrilineal kindred is best seen in the commemoration rituals for close ancestors. A dead person is commemorated on the anniversary of his or her death for four generations. This ritual is called *kije*. Chief responsibility for the ritual is passed from a father to his eldest son.

Two principles are involved in defining the range of actual participants at a *kije*. One major principle is that lineal descendants offer rites to their ancestors, but this rule is modified by another behavioral principle for forming action groups: collateral members are involved in addition to the lineal descendants. The food offerings at a *kije* are later divided and distributed. The range of agnates to whom offerings are distributed may include fifth and sixth cousins, a fact that demonstrates the importance of collateral relations. Figure 1, for example, shows who participated in the ritual for ego's father. In addition to the lineal descendants—ego and ego's brothers—ego's first cousins (one of them along with his mother) and a second cousin also took part. These collaterals attended not because they were descendants of common ancestors, but because the ritual was sponsored by a close agnatic kinsman.

Underlying these activities is a sense of familiarity and reciprocal obligation to pay respect to the direct ancestors of close kin. The rituals are held on the anniversary of the death of every ancestor, and close kinsmen reciprocate in

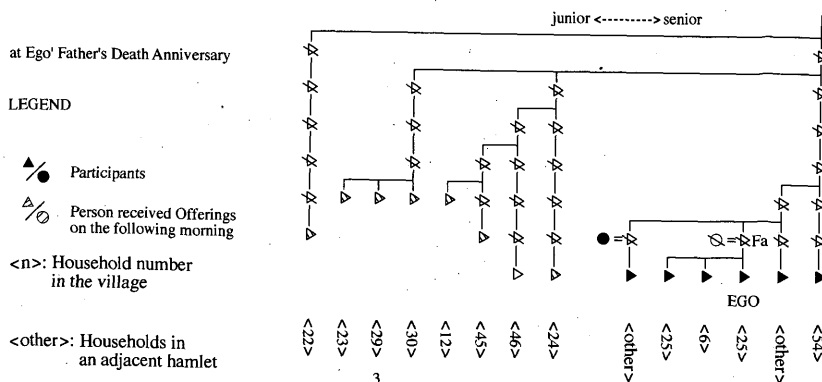


Fig. 1. Range of Participants and Offering Distribution

attending the rituals that each one of them sponsors. We may view the participants in each of these rituals as forming action groups centered on the sponsoring ego. The activities are carried out on the basis of households rather than individuals.

We may also observe the norms regarding the range of the worshippers at the last stage of worship for great-great-grandparents. Upon the death of the fourth-generation descendant in the senior line, the responsibility for the ritual is transferred to the surviving descendants in the junior lines. This procedure is repeated until all the descendants at that generation die out. In Figure 2, for example, the descendant in the senior line (47) had been in charge of worship of ancestor A. After the death of C's father, who was the fourth-generation descendant in the senior line, the responsibility devolved on E, who now offers the ritual as the eldest among the fourth-generation of descendants still alive. After the deaths of E, D, and F, the death-day anniversary ceremony for A will no longer be held.

Thus, we can delineate clearly the range of descendants commemorating ancestor A. This range should not be confused with the minimal lineage segment with a depth of four generations. A lineage segment continues to exist as long as there are descendants; a kindred group worshipping a fourth-generation ancestor ceases to exist when the current generation of its members dies out.

A cluster of people who originally comprised a *chiban* may survive beyond the usual number of generations if it develops into a functional group. For example, an ancestor may have *wit'o*, or property to support the expense of his or her commemoration ritual, and that ancestor's descendants may continue to preserve this property and continue the worship after the fourth generation. Even without such property, many Korean ancestors have descendants who continue to worship them with rituals at the grave site.<sup>3)</sup> However, if the location of the grave is forgotten, the ancestor is no longer commemorated individually; instead, he is treated as a member of a category of general ancestors on seasonal occasions.<sup>4)</sup>

Death anniversary rituals also reflect genealogical distance. The ritual for a

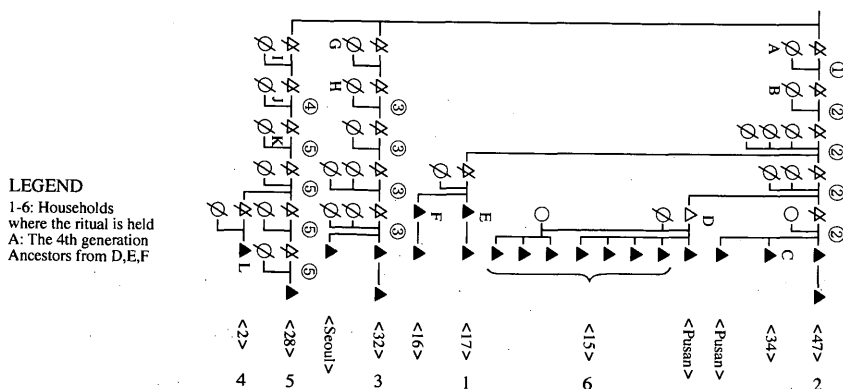


Fig. 2. Movement of Responsibility to Worship for the 4th Ascending Generation Ancestor

father is accorded greater care than that for a grandfather, and a grandfather's rite is on a larger scale than that for a great-grandfather. The norm is that one should pay greatest respect to the seniormost forebear to be commemorated, i.e., to the great-great-grandparent. Yet, descendants tend to prepare more lavish rituals for forebears with whom they feel a more intimate connection.

The motivations for worshipping close ancestors deserve special examination. Using data from Chindo Island on the southern coast, Itō Abito describes in detail the process of absorbing ancestors into the corporate worship of their respective lineage segments [Itō 1983]. He argues that the motive for continuing commemoration rituals is that unworshipped ancestors bring misfortune upon their close descendants [1983:438]. However, Chindo Island may not be a typical case. A Confucian-minded Korean would be reluctant to admit the possibility that one's ancestor would cause descendants to suffer misfortune; accordingly, it would be worthwhile to examine information from other parts of the country where Confucian influence has been more profound than on Chindo. It is possible that even in more Confucian regions, similar fearful motives may be found covered by a thick layer of Confucianized ideas.

### *Evidence for Patrilineal Kindreds in South Korea*

In summarizing the concept of unilateral kindred in South Korea, we can state that:

1. Death-anniversary rituals are held by people who consider themselves within a close genealogical distance from the deceased. These rituals are not offered by a minimal segment of a lineage.
2. In marginal, mostly coastal, areas, we find the custom of distributing responsibility for death-anniversary rituals among descendants. For example, the ritual for the mother is sometimes assigned to a younger brother [Itō 1983; Yō 1980; Suenari 1985]. Yō also suggests that the responsibilities for anniversary rituals were often distributed among the children until the eighteenth century [Yō 1980].
3. The degree of closeness between an ego and his or her relatives, including the ancestor, is reflected in the mourning dress system and in the system of measuring kinship distance by counting *ch'on*.

All of these features are consistent with the concept of unilateral kindred.

### **The Vietnamese Case**

#### *Descent System and Kindred*

Patrilineages, organized around a core composed of a senior line of descent, exist in many villages of North Vietnam.<sup>5)</sup> The eldest son in the senior line succeeds his father and becomes the lineage head, called a *tru'o'ng ho*, *ho* meaning a lineage. A Vietnamese lineage has a board of leaders to deal with lineage matters such as accounting for its property. Some lineages also have written genealogies, and

many have their own ancestral halls as well. Some of these halls are as elaborate and magnificent as those found in Taiwan.

A lineage is composed of agnates living in a village, though some of those who have left the village may retain lineage membership. Available data are insufficient to determine how long the emigrants keep contact with their agnates in the original village. However, a few generations seem to be enough to sever the links. Written genealogies list a considerable number of people who live elsewhere and have little contact with their lineage head.<sup>6)</sup>

Comparisons with Chinese and Korean lineages will underscore the peculiar features of the Vietnamese lineage. The amount of common land held by a Vietnamese lineage, which is a few hectares at most, is not as large as in South China. Particularly since the recent land reform was enacted, few Vietnamese lineages have common land for ancestor worship. Lineage segmentation within a village occurs less frequently than in China.<sup>7)</sup> Genealogies are also less elaborate, reflecting the smaller size of the lineages and weaker incentives for organizing wider networks across villages.

Vietnamese genealogies were traditionally written either in Chinese or in *Chunom* letters, the latter being Vietnamese letters devised by combining elements of Chinese characters. A few genealogies have been translated into Vietnamese written in Roman script, so that present-day descendants may understand them and can continue to record the names of offspring. However, untranslated genealogies are also kept as symbols of lineage status. Some lineage elders still have a knowledge of Chinese characters and can provide explanations of their meanings.

Ties among Vietnamese lineage members tend to lose their binding force with the passage of time. A once tightly knit group of close relatives sharing a common great-grandfather, for instance, dissolves into several such groups after a few generations have elapsed.

Ancestral halls are extensions of family altars kept in the houses of descendants in the senior line, and they are connected with the ancestral rituals. One of the purposes of constructing an ancestral hall is to display the power and solidarity of a kinship group. Compared to Chinese ancestral halls, however, Vietnamese halls are more closely associated with rituals of ancestor commemoration. In this sense, they are more similar to Korean ancestral halls.

The general features of the Vietnamese kinship system are as follows:

1. The founding ancestor is the focus of lineage activities. Descendants gather on the anniversary of his death and on New Year's Day. A genealogy is often compiled. A wealthy lineage also builds an ancestral hall to demonstrate its prestige.
2. A genealogy usually begins in a concrete historical period and does not mention ancestors in a mythical time.
3. The generational depth is shallow, most lineages extending back less than 15 generations.
4. The shallow depth corresponds to the narrow range of agnates included in a



genealogy.

5. In many of the older genealogies, ancestors are not recorded in terms of their generation levels counted from the apical ancestor. Instead, they are described as the previous ancestor, the great-grandfather, the grandfather, or the father. That is, generational relations are counted from the point of view of the descendants.
6. Only a limited number of ancestral tablets are kept in ancestral halls. Typically they include those of the founding ancestors of the lineage and sometimes of lineage segments and a few distinguished ancestors at most. Sometimes a tablet of the wife of the founding ancestor is included.
7. The lineage organization seldom extends beyond the village, even though the descendants of a collateral branch may live in a nearby village and the two branches may have some contact among themselves.
8. There is hardly any settlement exclusively occupied by a single lineage. Even when a settlement is named after a family surname, the residents usually consist of people belonging to several different surname groups.
9. Some lineages have changed their surnames in the known past. These name changes occurred for various reasons, for example to escape pursuit by an antagonistic ruler or to follow the divine advice of an ancestor communicated in a dream. Occasionally, new surnames were granted by the king.

#### ***Kindred and Action Group***

Anniversary rituals for the ancestors are called *gio*. They are offered annually for close ancestors within a certain number of generations. Even though the present incumbent in the senior line of descent is vested with chief responsibility for the *gio* rituals, their expenses are now partly shared by other lineage members gathered for these occasions if there is no common property reserved for ancestor worship. Therefore, a group of people worshipping close ancestors does not have a corporate nature; rather, it resembles an action group. Thus, we find the features of a corporate group only in the cases of seasonal rituals and the *gio* rituals for the apical ancestor of a whole lineage. (Marriage is prohibited only as long as the mutual relationships are remembered.)

#### ***Evidence for Patrilineal Kindred in Vietnam***

In Vietnam, ideally death-anniversary rituals are offered to paternal ancestors within four generations. The direct descendant in the senior line has the chief responsibility to offer these rites. Very often, however, descendants find it difficult to recall the death dates of ancestors more than three generations back. They are often embarrassed when they find it hard to remember the death dates of even closer ancestors. This suggests that there is a wide variation in the degree to which people actually trace their ancestors. It can be inferred that ancestors beyond the grandfather are commemorated only by the family of the descendant in the senior line. The only exception is the apical ancestor who is commemorated by the lineage

as a whole.

There are cases in which anniversary rituals for ancestors are distributed among descendants. Though the evidence is limited, I found at least one genealogy that recorded that the responsibilities for death-day ceremonies were distributed among the descendants (see Figure 3). The last allocation of ritual responsibility mentioned in that genealogy occurred a few generations ago. Even though it is hard to know the background leading to this distribution, the fact that the distribution occurred suggests that the death anniversary rituals are conducted on the basis of genealogical closeness. The rituals are maintained only for a certain number of generations, though the number seems to be flexible.

Kinsmen and their spouses wear mourning dress that classifies them according to their degree of closeness to the deceased. The distinctions in mourning dress are simple, dividing relatives into direct descendants and their spouses, close collaterals, and others. More elaborate distinctions existed in the past, as indicated in the manuals for family rituals such as *Tho moi gia li* which is basically the same as Chinese *Zhu zi jia li*.

Many genealogies are compiled for the purpose of recording agnates who are to be commemorated. As mentioned earlier, ancestors are designated by their positions relative to descendants, i.e., father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather of ego (Figure 4, Type D, Descendant-oriented genealogy). Sometimes a founding ancestor and his descendants for the next few generations are recorded separately (Figure 4, Type A, Ancestor-oriented genealogy). Descendants born after the compilation of a genealogy are recorded under their names only, often without honorific kinship notations.

The arrangement of ancestral altars reflects differences in the categories of ancestors enshrined there (see Figure 5).<sup>8)</sup> The upper altar holds an incense pot for the founding ancestor and other remote ancestors, while a lower altar holds incense pots for close ancestors such as parents, father's parents, and others of recent generations. Sometimes another altar is prepared to the side containing incense pots for collateral kin who died without leaving descendants, such as a father's sister (*baco*), or grandfather's brother (*ong manh*).

Thus, the arrangement of the altar visually conveys the existence of two types of kinship organization based on contrasting principles. The remote ancestors

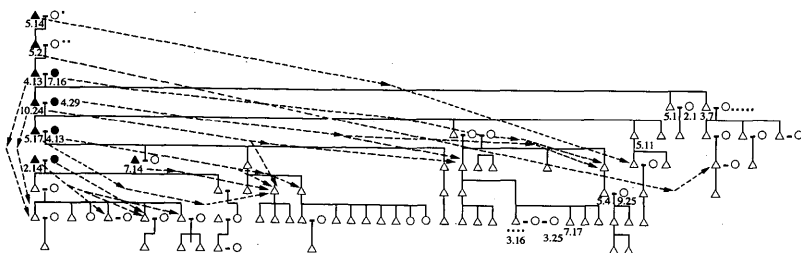


Fig. 3. Distribution of death Anniversary Rituals

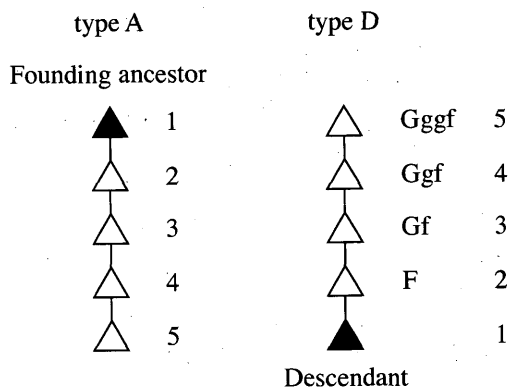


Fig. 4. Two Types of Counting Generations

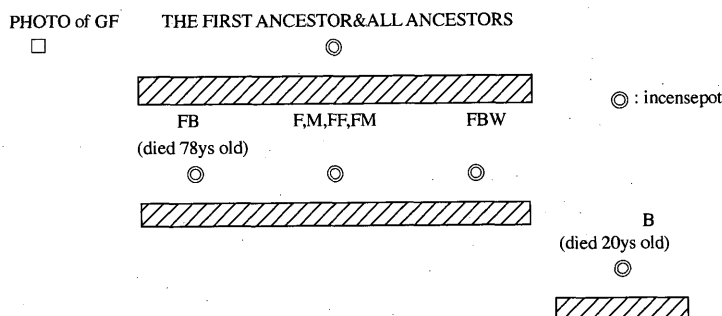


Fig. 5. Ancestral Alter of Vu Family at the Ture Lang (village) near the Hanoi Zoo (They gather once a year on July 11th.)

worshipped at the upper altar represent an ancestor-oriented descent group of the lineage type, while those worshipped at the lower altar represent an ego-oriented organization of kindred type. While both principles may exist in the minds of the people, the ego-oriented principle appears to be the original and major one. The genealogies that this writer has collected suggest that the ancestor-oriented principle became organizationally significant only in the nineteenth century.

## The Chinese Case

### *Descent System and Kindred*

Patrilineal descent is the fundamental factor for the formation of kinship groups in China, though locality is also important. Lineage segmentation is found mostly among a lineage's more prosperous members.

Although features of a patrilineal kindred are not as visible as among the Koreans or Vietnamese, the Chinese concept of *wufu*, the five mourning grades, is based precisely on this principle. Further research might find other activities for

which the concept of a patrilateral kindred offers the best explanation. For example, among the descent groups defined by Ebrey and Watson [1986:5], it seems possible to distinguish two different kinds of organizations: one an ancestor-oriented group that theoretically lasts for generations, the other a unilateral kindred formed around an influential person and activated as an action group that lasts only as long as that person's power is maintained.

### ***Kindred and Action Group***

Patrilateral kindreds seem more distinctively discernible in northern China. Han Min's recent research in Northern Anhui Province suggests the existence of patrilateral kindred there. The kin within the *wufu* range are important not only in funerals but also in marriages, celebrations given one month after the birth of a child, New Year's activities, and other festivities [Han 1993:310-320].

Han's findings are in accord with Myron Cohen's observations [Cohen 1990]. Cohen's research also suggests similarities between northern Chinese and Korean customs. The contrasts that appear so sharp when southern China and Korea are compared may not be so clear in a comparison of northern China and Korea. We may even find greater similarities than differences.

### ***Features of Kindred and Historical Perspectives***

Asymmetrical segmentation is one of the most conspicuous features of Chinese lineages. This means that a person's ties are selectively mobilized for organization. The wealthier families and lineages tend to include kin of a wider range in both their kindreds and descent groups. The poorest, on the other hand, rarely maintain relationships beyond siblings and are satisfied with being inactive members of the more inclusive or high-level lineages, sharing descent with but enjoying rare access to the prerogatives of these large groups.

According to the classical Chinese *tsung* system, only royal families were permitted to worship remote ancestors. Ordinary people were not permitted to worship ancestors beyond four generations, ancestors that could serve as focal points for lineages. Moreover, the eldest son in the senior line of descent was designated as the leader of a group. Makino [1949:132] infers that these phenomena reflect the kin group solidarity of that era: smaller groups of brothers or cousins showed stronger solidarity than larger groups descended from remoter ancestors. Thus, the concept of kindred may provide a new clue for a better understanding of the society when the classical *tsung* system was practised.

The importance of extra-household agnatic ties since the pre-Han period is reflected in the *wufu* system. As Patricia Ebrey notes, "the classical prescription for these relations can be summarized in a sentence: Second and third cousins were mourning relatives....fourth cousins, however, were not, and in the classics it was said that kinship ended at that point" [1986:18]. From the Han (202 B.C.-A.D.220) to the Tang (618-906) periods, we find various types of agnatic groupings. Ebrey refers to groups of local agnates offering financial aid to widows, orphans,

and those having trouble paying for weddings and funerals. But such solidarity depended more on the personal leadership of the educated; these local groups of agnates did not hold property or offer ancestor rites in common at grave sites.

Full-fledged lineages began to be formed as corporate entities only in the Sung period (906–1279). Even in the early part of the Sung period, one still finds kindred-like elements appearing at the initial stages of lineage formation. At that time, some scholars began to assemble their agnates into groups on the basis of shared ancestors. For example, Han Ch'i (1008–1075) urged his sons and nephews to continue to bury all of their relatives near the graves of his father and grandfather. Although his local descent group had very limited genealogical depth, he wished to continue his father's attempt to reconstruct the family genealogy by collecting grave inscriptions of ancestors who had lived in another province. His concern to keep all the graves together would have provided a clearer focus for the formation of a descent group of an ancestor-oriented type [Ebrey 1986:24–25]. While rites at the family altar were offered only for ancestors up to the great-great-grandfather, at the grave site they were offered as far back as the first ancestor. The presence of communal property to pay for these rituals was critical for the continued worship at the grave site. When a genealogy was written for the first time, it may have covered only a small number of generations because knowledge of the descendants was limited, with a result resembling a Vietnamese genealogy.<sup>9)</sup>

### The Japanese Case

Japan has no patrilineal descent system, and Japanese kin categories are based on a bilateral principle.<sup>10)</sup> Nevertheless, the Japanese case is included in this discussion of unilateral kindred systems for the following reasons. First, in Japan the bilateral principle is modified by the unilateral *ie* household system. Second, Groups of households (*ie*) that are related to each other through close kin ties of their core members are called *shinseki*. These groups are based on a kindred principle, but the relations are traced bilaterally. Thus, *shinseki* contrast with patrilineal kindred. Moreover, a *dōzoku*, or a group consisting of a main household and branch household(s), presents some features comparable to lineages in patrilineal societies.

### *Descent System and Kindred*

The morphological difference between *dōzoku* and *shinseki* is comparable to that between lineages and patrilineal kindreds in other East Asian societies. Though the two organizations are based on contrasting principles, they functionally merge when the members of a main and a branch household have kindred relations with each other, as occurs just after branching. This resembles the Chinese case, where lineage members also have close genealogical relations with each other at the initial period after segmentation.

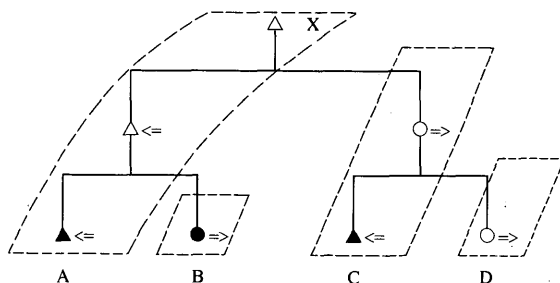
### Kindred and Action Group

Since Japanese *shinseki* are organized around bilateral ties, one might expect their features to contrast completely with those of a unilateral kindred. However, the *ie* that make up a *shinseki* recruit their members through strict unilateral affiliation. In consequence, a *shinseki* is neither patrilineal nor matrilineal but *ie*-lateral: the membership of a child is decided by the residence pattern of his or her parents at the time of their marriage. If the parents chose virilocal residence, the child belongs to his or her paternal *ie* and *dōzoku*. If they chose uxorilocal residence, the child belongs to the *ie* and *dōzoku* on the maternal side. This system brings about unilateral membership of *dōzoku* even though no patrilineal descent is involved. The bilateral principle of the *shinseki* is modified by this unilaterality.

### Evidence for Unilateral Kindred in Japan

The following features of *shinseki* resemble those of kindred:

1. A *shinseki* is a category of relatives with whom ego traces kin ties bilaterally.
2. Affines are included in *shinseki*. An uncle's wife, for instance, is automatically counted among ego's *shinseki*.
3. Even though bilateral kin relations are traced between individuals, the *ie* is the unit activated for many activities. This affects the bilaterality of *shinseki* activities in some regions of Japan (see Figure 6). Furthermore, formal giftgiving and mutual assistance are offered in the name of the family head. Therefore, it is appropriate to regard *shinseki* as a network among *ie* families, rather than among individuals.



In the grave worship of X in 15th of July, A,B and C are supposed to go, while D is not.

(at Tokaino mura in Nara prefecture. Gamo 1960:240-244)

Fig. 6. Effects of *Ie*-Laterality on the Range of Descendants to Grave Worship

Conclusion

By introducing the concept of unilateral kindred, we realize that there sometimes exists in a unilineal society an ego-centered group whose range is often clearly reckoned, whose solidarity has a moral basis, and which forms the core of an action group. The major characteristics that distinguish a unilateral from a bilateral kindred are the absence of overlapping membership, the presence of strict marriage prohibitions, and the relatively minor role that unilateral kindred plays in kinship activities (see Figure 7).

The last two characteristics vary from society to society, however. The importance of the kindred in a particular society is related to the functional role that descent groups play. For example, in some parts of northern China the patrilineal kindred may coincide with the exogamous range, while in southern China the lineage is the unit of exogamy.

The concept of unilateral kindred may help us avoid interpreting action groups as minimal segments of lineages. This conventional interpretation runs up against some especially unusual features in the Korean case. Among the Vietnamese, we find similar and more conspicuous phenomena that are hard to explain using the lineage concept alone. Even among the Chinese, it would be difficult to explain some of the activities related to the people within the *wufu* category unless we apply the notion of temporary groups based on the principle of kindred.

The concept of unilateral kindred also helps us infer the process through which the Korean and Vietnamese kinship systems changed into patrilineal systems under strong Chinese influence. Judging from the historical evidence, a strong patrilineal system appears not to have existed in either Korea or Vietnam before the introduction of the Chinese rituals represented in *Zhu zi jia li*. In both societies, daughters formerly had been treated equally with sons in the inheritance of family property. The inheritance system, of course, does not necessarily go hand in hand with the descent system; but it is difficult to imagine how a full-fledged patrilineal system could have existed with the practice of equal inheritance among sons and daughters. This inference is supported by the high position in which women were held in Korea and Japan at that time.

Judging from the Japanese case, the strong Chinese influence alone was not enough for a full-fledged patrilineal system to emerge in a bilateral society. Where

	bilateral	patrilineal
1. a category around ego	+	+
2. the range counted	+	+
3. membership overlap	+	-
4. backed with moral basis	+	+
5. marriage regulation often absent	+	-
6. not a group but a base for action group	+	+

Fig. 7. Comparison of Patriateral Kindred Compared with Bilateral Kindred

a patrilineal kindred already existed, on the other hand, it would have been much easier to transplant a Chinese-style patrilineal system. There is inadequate evidence to decide whether or not Korea or Vietnam originally had such patrilineal kindred. Even if they had bilateral kindred, however, it would have been easier to change from a bilateral to a patrilineal system than to start a lineage system from nothing.

At the moment this hypothesis remains only speculative, but a study of the Mu'o'ng people may help clarify the process of transformation in Vietnam. The Mu'o'ng are most closely related linguistically to the Viet people and are regarded as non-Sinicized Viet. It is likely that they preserve many customs the Viet lost during Sinicization. My own research suggests that their kinship system lacks the rigid patrilineality of the present Vietnamese system, and shows some ambilateral features such as the custom of uxorilocal marriage. Perhaps a fuller examination of this ethnic group will provide another case congruent with the hypothesis that a kindred system preceded and helped bring about the existence of patrilineal kinship systems.

## Notes

- 1) The Japanese kinship system may be an exception, even though some represent it as patrilineal.
- 2) Freeman [1961:204] refers to the cases of the Nuer, Tallensi, and Hopi. He concludes, however, that "whenever special functions attach to either agnatic or uterine kin in contra-distinction to other cognates, this renders impossible the existence in this society of undifferentiated bilateral kindreds." Here he points to the improbability of cognatic kindred in unilineal societies, but does not consider the possibility of unilateral kindred.
- 3) Without such property, the amount of offerings may be nominal, or take the form of joss sticks burned at the grave of an ancestor.
- 4) It should be noted that most of the graves of the ancestors below the founding ancestor of the village are remembered, even in fishing villages. Only cremated ancestors have no graves.
- 5) This discussion of the Vietnamese case is based on data collected during my field survey in 1992 and 1993.
- 6) A genealogical diagram of the Hoang lineage at the village of Phu Luu shows that a third of the people senior to the present head whose names are listed are not resident in the village.
- 7) Recently some lineages have shown a strong interest in organizing loose coalitions among dispersed localized segments. When genealogies are found that show a relationship among the dispersed segments, a gathering of their respective representatives is held. Similar gatherings occur in South Korea and Taiwan, but they are on a much smaller scale than in South Korea and take place only sporadically.
- 8) On 11 July 1992, for example, I attended the death-anniversary ritual of the Vu family's apical ancestor at the home of the descendant of the senior line, located on the outskirts of Hanoi near the zoo.
- 9) This happened not only in the Sung period when systematic compilation of lineage genealogies began, but also in later periods. I have seen one genealogy edited in Yunnan in the late Ch'ing period. In this genealogy, the relations are traced from ego, exactly



like typical Vietnamese genealogies: the first-generation ancestor is the father, the second-generation ancestor is the grandfather, and so on for six generations. This genealogy was compiled by an old man with a photograph of his own family. Such ego-oriented genealogies, like those found in Vietnam, may not have been all that unusual in China.

- 10) The Japanese kinship system has been interpreted by some people in terms of patrilineal descent, and by others in terms of bilateral descent. Yet, both these interpretations fail to explain such common Japanese phenomena as *mukoyōshi* (adopted son-in-law) or *dōzoku*.

### Romanizations

baco (V)	婆姑
chiban (K)	집안
chokpo (K)	족보 (族譜)
ch'on (K)	촌 (寸)
Chunom (V)	字喃
dōzoku (J)	同族
ie (J)	イエ(家)
kije (K)	기제 (忌祭)
mukoyōshi (J)	婿養子
munjung (K)	문중 (門中)
ong manh (V)	翁猛
pon'gwan (K)	본관 (本貫)
shinseki (J)	親戚
tangnae (K)	당내 (堂内)
Tho moi gia li (V)	壽梅家礼
tsung (C)	宗
wit'o (K)	위토 (位土)
wufu (C)	五服
Zhu zu jia li (C)	朱子家礼

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