



## Order in Tribal Middle Indian 'Kinship'

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**Abstract.** – Relationship terminologies of about one hundred million tribal Middle Indians contain contradictory values of hierarchy and symmetry within four terminological lines as articulated in many different languages. Research problems deriving from tribal multilingualism are also taken up. The comparison with the Aranda terminology and that between terminology and normative behaviour is supposed to indicate the major pitfalls of formal analyses. Finally, the general trend of equating alternating generations in lineal terminologies raises the gender issue, since (married) parents and their children cannot be equated due to the incest-ban. Reclassification seems to lead to a male bias as a systemic precondition. [*Tribal India, lineal terminologies, values-ideas, multilingualism, field research, hierarchy, affinal exchange*]

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### 1 Introduction

The study of 'kinship' has always held a marginal status in German ethnological research, and for the last decade or two it has also been on the decline among social anthropologists of France, the Netherlands, and the English language nations. Scholars of these countries had earlier introduced considerable theoretical rigour into the discipline by applying formal analyses to relationship terminologies, descent constructs, and marriage rules. Of late, however, subjectivism and situationalism have become the trend, and since the study of

social structures other than one's own has been denounced as 'othering,' the advances achieved by generations of anthropologists seem to be committed to oblivion. These elders and ancestors of the discipline had endeavoured to understand the social thought of *anthropos*.

Many professionals now simply lack the training to recognise the relevance or even the technical tools of 'kinship studies.' Such courses are no longer taught in most German departments. Other readers may not be interested in decisive ethnographic details of a specific research effort. Cumbersome sequences become boring and are yet unavoidable. By contrast, the popular trend goes to 'interdisciplinary' fields, i.e., topics without the prerequisites of a discipline. For several of such reasons I have, in the present study, shunned much of technical language with the aim of promoting comprehension and attracting wider attention, even though such jargon is generally indispensable in this or in any other academic discipline, just as laborious details cannot be avoided. Yet my aim is to present the values<sup>1</sup> of tribal Middle Indian 'kinship' without much of the technical language and ethnographic specification. The latter will be supplied in the appendix, so that the regional and the 'kinship' specialists can examine the empirical evidence of my proposition. To begin with, the kinds of 'relationships' denoted by terminologies will be clarified.

<sup>1</sup> The concept is, of course, taken from Dumont (1983: ix).