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Background
The field manuals were originally intended as working documents for internal use only. They were supplemented by verbal instructions and additional guidelines in many cases. If you have questions about using the materials, or comments on the viability in various field situations, feel free to get in touch with the authors.

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Interview on kinship

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This is a supplement to the "Kinship Domain for 'Space in Thinking' Subproject" entry (by Levinson, Senft, and Enfield) in the MPI Language and Cognition Group Field Manual for 2001. For 'background and motivation' and 'Pre-requisite task: collecting a genealogy', see the original entry.

- **Motivation**
  To see whether and how people think about kinship relations in spatial terms – compare our locutions 'distant cousin', 'close kin', 'higher generations', 'descendants', etc.
- **Priority**
  High for those interested in the multimodal distribution of information, and the spatial representation of knowledge. All field workers ought to understand the local kinship system anyway, as doing so will open many conceptual doors.

1. Interview task

We want to know how people *think* about their field of kin, on the supposition that it is quasi-spatial. To get some insights here, we need to video a discussion about kinship reckoning, the kinship system, marriage rules and so on, with a view to looking at both the linguistic expressions involved, and the gestures people use to indicate kinship groups and relations. Unlike the task in the 2001 manual, this task is a direct interview method.

Set up
Film in the preferred manner for gesture studies (see p8 of this manual). Have a stick handy if sitting on earth, or chalk if on concrete (for diagrams). For participants, in the first instance try and get men who are distantly related. (Distant relations will share genealogical knowledge, but still have some interest in working out the details.) You may get an interestingly different picture if you repeat the whole thing with women.

Task
Try and get the participants to talk about kinship relations. For example:

(1) Ask the speakers to explain the meaning of certain kin terms. E.g. ask *What is the difference between 'cousin' and 'second cousin'?* Some of these kinship relations will be trivial and give rise to little conversation – but for distant kin there will often be different ways to reckon to them, and thus two or more potential terms, and you can ask 'Why this one and not that one?'

(2) Ask the speakers to explain who can and can't marry, and why. Get them to explain how things will change for a boy when he marries (e.g. he has a whole bunch of in-laws or affines, previously unrelated or otherwise related; also his kin terms to others may change).

(3) If the society has named kinship groups – clans, lineages, or the like – ask speakers to explain how many there are locally, and how they are related to one another, and who can marry whom. Provide a stick, so that diagrams can be drawn in the dirt, as this may well be a natural mode of explanation (cf. Conklin on the Hanunóó in Tyler, *Cognitive Anthropology*, 1968: 113.)

(4) Ask about inheritance: how is land passed on? If father to son, what happens if there are no sons, or no children at all? Ask about political and religious office – how is it passed on? Ask about how villages are founded – do they maintain kinship relations to the source village? Can the two villages intermarry? Ask what happens in cases of adoption or foster parentage – is the original genealogical

connection remembered, and how does it affect how the adopted child can marry?

2. **Features of interest**
    This is a pilot task, and one of the amazing things about the kinship literature is that – despite the piles of tomes and PhDs – there is scarcely anything on how people actually reckon kinship relations in conversation (see Levinson 1977, *Social deixis in a Tamil village*, UCB PhD, and D. Zeitlyn, in press, *Talking Mambila Kinship*). Still, what we may expect is:

(a) there will be spatial metaphors for ascending and descending generations, close vs. distant classificatory kin, and so forth;

(b) there will be corresponding gestures;

(c) kin groups will be conceived of as places in space, connected by kinship 'paths' of marriage and ancestral connection – in particular marriage will be seen as a coming together or joining of kin groups; and gestures will follow suit.

(d) if people diagram kin relations, there will be a spatial relation between the diagram and the gestures accompanying description. To record the diagrams, use a still camera so you don't stop videotaping the interaction. You may need to ask them later to remake the diagrams – then you can fill the grooves with flour and get a very clear shot.

Publication

Given the poverty of available information, an article on how people actually calculate and talk about kinship relations would be very publishable in anthropology and linguistic anthropology journals. It may be especially interesting to compare two groups, and do a collaborative paper with a colleague.