Linguistics 051

Proto-Indo-European Language and Society:

Kinship Terminology

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Kinship Terms

PIE has a full set of ordinary kinship terms referring to close family members:

**FATHER:** *p-h₂-ter- (ordinary word); *gengh₁-tor- ‘procreator’ (PROGENITOR)

**DAD, PAPA:** *tat-, *at-, *papa

**MOTHER:** *má-h₂-ter- (ordinary); *gengh₂-trih₂- ‘procreatrix’

**MOM, NANA:** *n-h₂-em-, *h₂-em, *m-h₂-em, *h₂-akk-eh₂

**SON:** *suH-nú-s, *suH-iú-s, **DAUGHTER:** *dʰuḡ-h₂-ter-

**BROTHER:** *bré-h₂-ter-, **SISTER:** suésor-

Additional words for grandparents and grandchildren can be reconstructed. For the purpose of cultural reconstruction the way in which more distant kinship relations are expressed may be illuminating.
‘Omaha’ system of kinship terminology equates certain roles which are held distinct in English — often equated with patrilineal/patrilocal society:

father = paternal uncle [indicated for PIE] (older male relative)
mother = maternal aunt
brother/sister = children of paternal uncle or maternal aunt
maternal grandfather = maternal uncle [probably not PIE]
children of maternal grandfather = children of maternal uncle

It’s unclear if PIE had a tendency towards Omaha system organization or whether this emerged later in Balto-Slavic, Germanic and Italo-Celtic.
From the point of view of the woman marrying to husband’s family. Individuals in black would not have been part of the household.
From the point of view of the man bringing a woman into his family. Individuals in black would not have been part of the family.
grandson = sister’s child (nephew)?

The ‘grandson = sister’s child (nephew)’ equation can be seen in

*nep-ōt- ‘grandson’ (> ‘nephew’ — only sister’s daughter)

*nep-t-ih₂ ‘granddaughter’ (> ‘niece’ — brother’s daughter)
L neptis ‘granddaughter, any female descendant’
> in Imperial era also ‘niece’: cf. Sp nieto, Fr neveu
OE nift ‘niece, granddaughter, step-daughter’

≠ ? *suesr-ios ‘sister’s son’ or ‘mother’s brother’
Terms for relatives of one’s father or husband

These are specific and numerous.

*h₂euh₂-o-s  
‘father’s father’ (L avus, Sp abuelo)

*p-h₂tr-ōu-s, *p-h₂tr-u-io-s  
‘father’s brother; male relative of one’s father’

*snus-ó-s  
‘brother’s wife’ = ‘son’s wife’ (Sp nuera)

*nep-ōt-s  
‘brother’s son’ = ‘grandson’ (Sp nieto)

*daih₂wér-  
‘husband’s brother’ (L lēvir)

*h₁ien-h₂ter-  
‘husband’s brother’s wife’

*ḡlh₃-uo-s  
‘husband’s sister’

*suék-ur-o-s  
‘husband’s father’ (Sp suegro)

*suek-r-úh₂-s  
‘husband’s mother’
Terms for relatives of one’s mother, wife or daughter, and for ‘father’s sister’ are often not securely reconstructible, if at all, or are non-specific:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Reconstruction</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>‘father’s father’</td>
<td>‘mother’s father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? *h₂euh₂-</td>
<td>‘mother’s brother’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? *h₂euh₂-ih₂</td>
<td>‘mother’s mother’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ma-h₂tr-uh₂</td>
<td>‘mother’s sister’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>‘father’s sister’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>*g̑emH-ro-s</td>
<td>‘sister’s husband’ (derivative of *g̑emH- ‘marry’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>*g̑omH-ter-</td>
<td>‘daughter’s husband’ (= ‘marrier’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= ‘husband’s father’</td>
<td>‘wife’s father’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? *suek-ur-ó-s</td>
<td>‘wife’s brother’ (cf. *suek-ur-os ‘husband’s father’)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Marriage

*\(h_2\text{ued}(h_2)\) - ‘to marry (a woman)’ > WED, Skt \(vad^h\acute{u}\)-
*\(\text{\text{\textbackslash g}}\text{emH}\) - ‘to marry (a woman)’, \(\gamma\alpha\mu\acute{e}\omega\) (GAMETE)

In a patrilocal system the groom literally ‘led away’ the bride from her family to his. To express ‘get married’ from the woman’s point of view it was necessary to use a middle-passive form of the same verbs.

*\(\text{\text{\textbackslash g}}\text{emH-o-ter}\) - ‘marrier’ > ‘son-in-law’ Skt \(j\acute{a}m\ddot{a}t\acute{a}r\)-
*\(\text{\text{\textbackslash g}}\text{mH-r\acute{o}-s}\) - ‘marrier’ > ‘son-in-law’ \(\gamma\alpha\mu\beta\rho\acute{o}\)
Husband and Wife

Basic words for ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ (*\(h_2\)\(\beta\)\(\nu\)\(\rho\) cf. ANDRO-, *\(g^w\)\(\epsilon\)\(h_2\)\(\gamma\)\(\nu\)\(\nu\) cf. QUEEN) are identical to those for ‘man’ and ‘woman’ generally.

In a large household (*\(d\)\(\delta\)m(h\(_2\))\(\circ\)(s) L domus, cf. DOMICILE) the eldest male would be the ‘master of the house’ (*\(p\)ot-i-s \(\pi\)\(\omicron\)\(\omicron\)\(\omicron\), \(d\)\(e\)m-s-pot-i-s > \(\delta\)\(e\)\(s\)\(\sigma\)p\(\omicron\)\(\omicron\)\(\omicron\) cf. DESPOT) and his wife the ‘lady of the house’ (*\(p\)ot-n-ih\(_2\) > \(\pi\)\(\omicron\)\(t\)n\(\omicron\)a).

In the larger unit of ‘clan’ (*\(u\)oi̱k- > \(\omicron\)\(\iota\)\(k\)o̱ς ‘household’, cf. ECONOMY) the leader was ‘lord of the clan’: *\(u\)i̱k-pot- or *\(u\)i̱k-ā-pot-

If the *\(p\)otis died, his eldest son became *\(p\)otis. But a WIDOW (*\(u\)ideu-eh\(_2\)) remained *\(p\)otnia after her husband’s death.
Others in the ‘family’

*₃orbʰ-o-s  ORPHAN: ὦρφανός, L orbus, Arm orb; OCS rabū ‘servant’
< *₃erbʰ- ‘to change status’ > H [harp-]

?*parik-eh₂ concubine: MIr aireach ‘(type of) concubine’, Av pairikā ‘demonic courtesan’

*iem-o-s twin: L geminus (GEMINI), Skt yamā-

The concept of ‘twins’ was very important in PIE mythology.