

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-h₂ter- (ordinary word); *ǵenh₁-tor- ‘procreator’ (PROGENITOR)

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

MOTHER: *má-h₂ter- (ordinary); ǵenh₂-tr-ih₂- ‘procreatrix’

MOM, NANA: *n-h₂em-, *h₂em, *m-h₂em, *h₂akk-eh₂

SON: *suH-nú-s, *suH-iú-s, DAUGHTER: *d^huǵ-h₂ter-

BROTHER: *bré-h₂ter-, 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

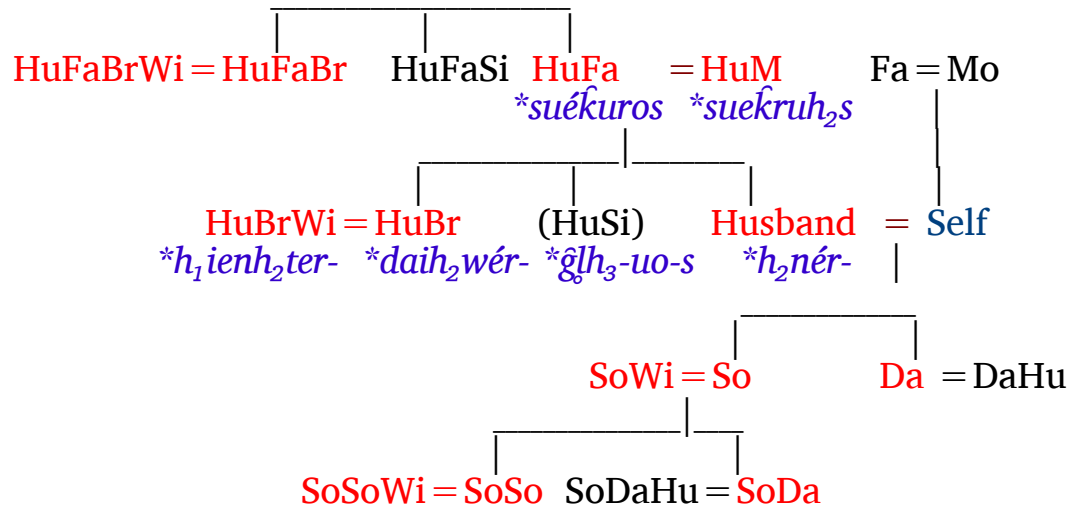
brother/sister = children of paternal uncle or maternal aunt

maternal grandfather = maternal uncle [probably not PIE]

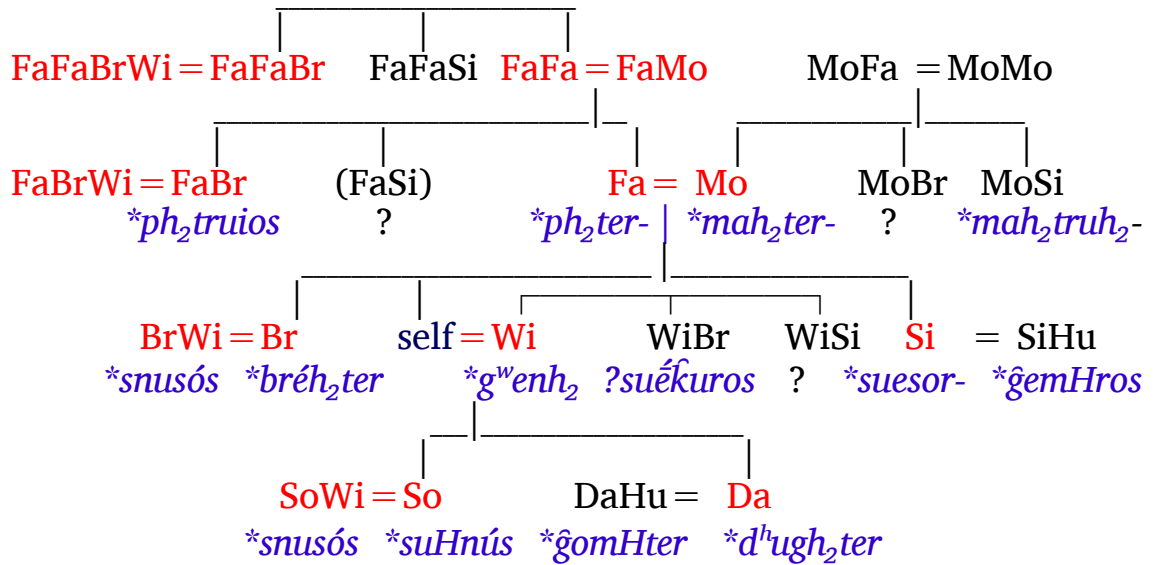
children of maternal grandfather = children of maternal uncle

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.

*h ₂ euh ₂ -o-s	'father's father' (L <i>avus</i> , Sp <i>ab-uelo</i>)
*p-h ₂ tr-ōu-s, *p-h ₂ tr-u-io-s	'father's brother; male relative of one's father'
*snus-ó-s	'brother's wife' = 'son's wife' (Sp <i>nuera</i>)
*nep-ōt-s	'brother's son' = 'grandson' (Sp <i>nieto</i>)
*daih ₂ wér-	'husband's brother' (L <i>lēvir</i>)
*h ₁ ien-h ₂ ter-	'husband's brother's wife'
*ǵ _ǵ h ₃ -uo-s	'husband's sister'
*suék-ur-o-s	'husband's father' (Sp <i>suegro</i>)
*suek-r-úh ₂ -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:

? = 'father's father'	'mother's father'
? *h ₂ eu ₂ -	'mother's brother'
? *h ₂ eu ₂ -ih ₂	'mother's mother'
*ma-h ₂ tr-uh ₂	'mother's sister'
?	'father's sister'
*ǵemH-ro-s	'sister's husband' (derivative of *ǵemH- 'marry')
*ǵomH-ter-	'daughter's husband' (= 'marrier')
= 'husband's father'	'wife's father'
? *suek̑-ur-ó-s	'wife's brother' (cf. *suek̑-ur-os 'husband's father')

Marriage

*h₂ued(h₂)- ‘to marry (a woman)’ > WED, Skt *vad^hú-*

*ǵemH- ‘to marry (a woman)’, γαμέω (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.

*ǵemH-o-ter- ‘marrier’ > ‘son-in-law’ Skt *jāmātar-*

*ǵmH-ró-s ‘marrier’ > ‘son-in-law’ γαμβρός

Husband and Wife

Basic words for ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ (*h₂nér- ἀνήρ cf. ANDRO-, *g^wenh₂- γυνή, cf. QUEEN) are identical to those for ‘man’ and ‘woman’ generally.

In a large household (*dóm(h₂)-o-s L *domus*, cf. DOMICILE) the eldest male would be the ‘master of the house’ (*pot-i-s πόσις, *dém-s-pot-i-s > δεσπότης cf. DESPOT) and his wife the ‘lady of the house’ (*pot-n-ih₂ > πότινις).

In the larger unit of ‘clan’ (*uoik̑- > οἶκος ‘household’, cf. ECONOMY) the leader was ‘lord of the clan’: *uik̑-pot- or *uik̑-ā-pot-

If the *potis died, his eldest son became *potis. But a WIDOW (*uideu-eh₂) remained *potnia after her husband’s death.

Others in the ‘family’

*h₃orb^h-o-s

ORPHAN: ὀρφανός, L *orbus*, Arm *orb*; OCS *rabŭ* ‘servant’
< *h₃erb^h- ‘to change status’ > H [harp-]

?*parik-eh₂

concubine: Mlr *aireach* ‘(type of) concubine’, Av *pairikā*
‘demonic courtesan’

*iem-o-s

twin: L *geminus* (GEMINI), Skt *yamá-*
The concept of ‘twins’ was very important in PIE
mythology.