The Kinship Terminology of the Sangtam Nagas

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Sifting through the voluminous ethnographic material on the Nagas compiled during the colonial and post-colonial periods, one finds only very sketchy information on the Sangtam. Despite the fact that they represent one of the major ethnic groups of present-day Nagaland, very little indeed has been written about the Sangtam, neither from a linguistic nor an anthropological perspective. This paper aims to present a first outline of the hitherto undescribed Sangtam kinship system. As we will see, the Sangtam nomenclatural system not only differs from most Naga kinship systems by displaying several atypical features, it also does not fit readily into conventional kinship categories.

Located in Eastern Nagaland, the Sangtam dwelling areas do not form a contiguous block but are split into two regions, separated by a mountain range which is also the watershed that divides India from Burma. Each region is inhabited by one territorial group or 'section': a western section (formerly known as the Northern Sangtam) inhabits the westernmost part of the Tuensang District, in the Chare and Longkhim subdivisions, whereas an eastern section (formerly known as the Central Sangtam) occupy the Kiphire district west of the Zungki (or Tiho) River[1]. Although the Tuensang and Kiphire Districts both extend along the Burmese border, Sangtam villages are only found on the Indian side of the international border. Oral history points to a migration from South to North, mainly along the natural corridor formed by the Tizu and Tsutha (formerly

1   Only one Sangtam village, Yezashimi (Yangzase in Sangtam) is located in Zunheboto District, abutting the Kiphire District. During the colonial period the three Sangtam sections were known as 'Northern', 'Central' and 'Southern', and the two former were sometimes denoted by Sumi (Sema) terms, respectively Lophomi and Tukhumi. In the 1960's the Sangtam of the southern section inhabiting the erstwhile Kohima District chose to merge themselves with the Eastern Rengma and Eastern Angami to form a new composite tribal entity, 'Chakhesang', which became known as Pochury after the defection of the Angami component.

Tita) valleys, and suggests that at one time the Sangtam territories were adjoining. Communication between the two sections was interrupted prior to European contact by an eastward expansion of the Sumi Nagas on the one hand and a westward movement of the Yimchungru Nagas on the other hand. The Sumi (formerly Sema) now occupy several former Sangtam sites whose original Sangtam population has been gradually expelled or absorbed. The Sangtam country is located to the immediate east of the Ao and Sumi speaking territories. To the East, their immediate neighbours are, from north to south, the Chang, Yimchungru, Tikhir, Makhuri, Chirr, and Longpfür (or Longphuri) Nagas. On the south they are bordered by the Pochury.

The Sangtam Nagas are patrilineal and patrilocal. They have named, non-localized, exogamous patrilineal clans (*ahong*). Some seventeen clans have been recorded through field investigations, but it is unclear if this is a complete list. Major clans such as Thongrü (Thonger, Thueru, or Theru according to the dialect spoken), Jingrü (Jinger, Jingre), Mongzarü (Mongzar), Anaru (Anar), Langti Thongrü (Langti Thonger), Rudy Thongrü (Rudy Thonger), are found more or less throughout the whole Sangtam country. Others have a more limited distribution. The Yangpha Theru (or Yingpi Thonger) clan, for example, is found only in the eastern section. Some of the smaller and more localized clans are of particular interest, since they identify themselves with major clans. For example, the Thezoru clan of Sanphure village relates itself to the Langti Thongrü clan, the Keori clan of Ngoromi identifies itself with the Jingru clan, and the Lamongri clan of Phelungre associates itself with the Anar clan. This occurs in very much the same way in which throughout the Naga Hills, clans often identify themselves with more major clans belonging to a neighbouring tribe.[2] Major clans had certain prerogatives and duties in the past, mainly in the realm of rituals. Contemporary Sangtam use their *ahong* titles in a way which is similar to how Westerners use surnames. Each clan may be segmented into distinct subclans or patrilineages but there is no specific term to denote the subdivisions, all of which are called *ahong*. For example, Kuchirü, Shunyak Kurü Thongrü and Süngthang

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2   Throughout the Naga hills, identifications are found between clans belonging to neighbouring tribes, often on the grounds of a common tradition. On the system of intertribal corresponding clans, see Hutton (1921: 135); Mills (1922: 92); Kauffmann (1939: 219).

Thongrü are all regarded as subdivisions of Thongrü and therefore their members cannot marry other members of the Thongrü (Thonger) clan.

As a language, Sangtam is spoken by approximately 80,000 people.[3] It belongs to a sub-grouping of the Tibeto-Burman language family which, besides Sangtam, also includes Lhota, Ao Chungli, Ao Mongsen, Ao Changki, Yimchunger, Tikhir, Chirr, Para, Koki, Makhuri, Yacham and Tengsa. The geographical extension of this group covers the central region of Nagaland and adjacent areas of Burma, stretching eastward from the edge of the plain of Assam across the Saramati mountain range to the bank of the Chindwin River in Burma. Sangtam speakers recognize several variants within the language, viz. 'Longkhim', 'Kiphire', 'Sanphure', 'Hurong', 'Phelungre' and 'Alisopur',[4] though the total number of dialects of Sangtam spoken today is unknown.[5] The present description pertains to both Western and Eastern sections and refers more specifically to the Longkhim and Kiphire dialects. The transcription of kinship terms follows the rules adopted by the missionaries who first devised a standard orthography for Sangtam, which was based on the dialect spoken in villages around Longkhim administrative headquarters in Tuensang district.

Sangtam kinship terms are independent nouns, consisting of a root and a neutral, non-relational prefix *a-*, for example *aja,* 'grandmother'. The vocative form, which is used when directly addressing someone, is formed by prefixing the kinship noun root with the possessive marker *i-*, 'my', thus the appropriate kin term for addressing one's grandmother is *ija*, 'my grandmother'. This form is also used when referring to one's grandmother as a third person in a conversation. The only exception to this rule is the term used for addressing one's father, *ua.* Similarly, the second person singular term is formed by adding prefix *nü-*, as in *nüja*, 'your grandmother'. When the noun root occurs with the non-relational prefix *a-*, it simply indicates the kin category, such as *aku*, 'maternal uncle', and is used in a referential context. As a rule, kinship noun roots never occur alone but are always prefixed.

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3   83,714 according to the Census of India, 2001. Official figures for 2011 have not yet been published.

4   All names, except the first one, are also village names. The Alisopur variant is spoken only in one village, Alisopur.

5   Nor do we know to what extent those six 'dialects' can be said to be mutually intelligible.

Several kin terms take a feminine form by suffixing the kinship noun root with one of the feminine semantic gender markers *-tpüh* or *–la*, or a combination of both, whereas the masculine form is usually left unmarked. Thus *aphüli* stands for both sister's child and sister's son, whereas *aphülitpüh* specifically denotes the sister's daughter. There are two semantic masculine gender markers, *–thre* (in *atsuthre*, 'son') and *-ba* (eg. *ani azaba*, 'younger brother', or *au aziba*, 'father's elder brother'). The plural gender for most kin terms is formed by adding the suffix *–rü*, as in *azarü*, 'children', or *ashumtsurü*, 'grandchildren'.

As a rule, vocatives are indicative of the relationship or attitude between the interlocutors. An individual is expected to address and refer to his senior relatives by way of proper kin terms whenever such terms exist, as a mark of respect. It would be considered as disrespectful for a person to address his or her senior by their name. Junior relatives are referred to by kin terms, and addressed either by kin terms or by their name. The use of kinship terms towards juniors, and to a lesser extent among contemporaries, indicates formal or neutral address, whereas the use of personal names indicates familiar or intimate address.

The terms presented in Table 1 appear as they are used in indirect reference and, unless explicitly specified, are employed by both sexes alike:

	Kinship Term	Focus	Derivative denotata
1	**amü** ('grandfather')	GF	FF, MF
2	**ajü** ('grandmother')	GM	FM, MM
3	**au** ('father')	F	FB, MZH (SC), WMB, HMB
4	**atpah/aya** ('mother')	M	FZ, MZ, FBW, MBW, WM, WFZ, WMZ, HM, HFZ, HMZ
5	**aka/akü** ('maternal uncle')	MB	MZH*, MBS+, WF, HF, DHF
6	**ama*/among**** ('elder brother')	eB	FBS+; MBDH+ (SC), MZDH+ (SC), FZDH+ (SC), HZH+
7	**afü** ('elder sister')	eZ	FBD+, MBSW+, MZSW+, HZ, SWM

8	**ani** ('younger sibling')	ySb, yB (with suffix *–achangba*), yZ (with suffix *-achangtpüh*)	FBS-, MBDH- (SC), MZDH- (SC), FZDH- (SC), HZH- FBD-, MBSW-, MZSW-, HBW-; HyZ, DHM-
9	**akitrum** ('first cousin')	MBCh, MZCh, FZCh	
10	**atsu** ('child')	Ch	S (with suffix *–thre*), D (with suffix *–latpüh*), BCh, ZCh (f. sp.) FBGCh, FZGCh, MBGCh, MZGCh, FZDH (SC), BDH, ZSW, ZDH, WBCh, WZCh, HBCh, HZCh
11	**shumtsurü** ('grandchild')	GCh	GrGS (with suffix *anyü-u-chung*), GrGD (with suffix *anyü-u-chungtpüh*)
12	**aphuli** ('sister's child/niece')	ZS (m. sp.), ZD (m. sp., with suffix *–tpüh*)	ZSW* (with suffix *–tpüh*, or *atsulatpüh*), WBS* (or *atsuthre*), WBD* (with suffix *–tpüh*, or *atsulatpü*, WZS* (or *atsuthre*), WZD* (with suffix *–tpüh*, or *atsulatpüh*)
13	**atsunya** ('child's spouse')	DH, SW (with suffix *–tpüh*)	BDH*, BSW* (with suffix *–tpüh*), ZDH*, ZSW* (with suffix *–tpüh*)
14	**axi*/axü**** ('husband's brother')	HB	
15	**axitpüh** ('sister-in-law')	BW* (m. sp.) WZ	FBSW, FZSW, HBW**
16	**ajangning** ('brother-in-law')	ZH, WB	FZH, FBDH, FZDH**
17	**ani** ('spouse')	Sp, H, W (with suffix *–tpüh*)	
18	**aling*** ('sister-in law')	eBW (f. sp.), HyZ	
29	**anyi/anyü**** ('mother-in-law')	WM	
20	**azuh**** ('wife's sibling-in-law')	WZH	WBW

21	**amari*** ('children's parents-in-law')		SWF (with suffix *-rü*), SWM (with suffix *-larü*), DHF (with suffix *-rü*), DHM (with suffix *-larü*)

* W. Sangtam only	m.sp. male speaking	SC: if of same clan as the speaker
** E. Sangtam only	f. sp. female speaking	s.a.: if of same age as the speaker

Description

a) Consanguines

Grandparents/great-grandparents
In the second ascending generation the system distinguishes terms by the grandparent's gender, but not by the parent's gender. Only two terms exist, which can be glossed as 'grandfather' (*amü*) and 'grandmother' (*ajü*). Kin terms for great-grandfather and great-grandmother are formed by adding 'anyü', 'two/second', followed by an appropriate gender suffix, to each of these elementary terms, thus *amü-anyü-uba* for great-grandfather and *ajü-anyü–utpüh* for great-grandmother. There are no terms for direct ascendants beyond great-grandparents.

Parents
Two distinct terms for 'mother' are used by the Sangtam, the usage of which depends on the speaker's clan. The term *itpa* is used by people from Jingrü, Mongzarü, Rüdi Thongrü and Anarü clans, whereas people from Thongrü and Langti Thongrü clans call their mother *iya*. The corresponding terms of reference are respectively *atpah* and *aya.*[6]

Uncles and aunts
Paternal uncles are terminologically equated with the father (*au*), and differentiated by their relative age to Ego's father by adjunction of the suffixes *aziba* ('older') or *azaba* ('younger'). There are no special terms for paternal and maternal aunts, these are simply equated with one's mother, and similarly differentiated by their relative age to Ego's mother. Thus the terms *atpah azitpüh* (or *aya azitpüh*) and *atpah azatpüh* (or *aya azatpüh*)

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6   A similar use of two terms for 'mother' is reported among the Lhota (Mills 1922: 94-95) and the Ao (Coupe 2007: 491; Mills 1926: 174).

are applied to the father's and mother's sisters, real and classificatory. Only maternal uncles are designated by a specific term, *aku*. They too can be further differentiated between *akü aziba* and *akü azaba* according to the relative age of the speaker to the mother's brother. In addressing a paternal uncle a person would simply use *ua* ('father'), and *itpah* or *iya* ('my mother') to address any aunt, according to clan. Maternal uncles are addressed as *iku* or *ika*.

Siblings

For elder siblings, three basic terms are distinguished according to the relative age of the speaker, with a further distinction in gender. *Ima* (or *imong* among Eastern Sangtam) and *ifa* are used in address respectively for elder brother and elder sister, whereas *ini* can simply be glossed as 'my younger sibling'. If needed, the latter can be broken into *ini achangba* and *ini achangtpüh*, for younger brother and younger sister respectively. The corresponding terms of reference are *among*, *afü* and *ani*. In colloquial conversations, a male or female Ego usually calls his or her younger siblings by their personal names, whereas the younger siblings may call the older siblings by the appropriate kin terms.
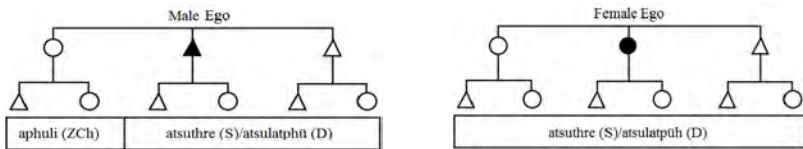
Cousins

No specific term exists for parallel cousins. The children of the father's brothers are addressed with the kinship terms for siblings, i.e. elder brother or sister (*ima/ifa*) if they are older than the person speaking, and either by name or as 'younger sibling' (*ini*) if they are younger. If they are of the same age as the speaker, they are simply addressed as 'siblings' (*ijena/ietpü*). All other first cousins are equated with one another and designated by a specific term, *kitrum*, irrespective of their gender and relative age to the speaker. In direct address an individual may simply call his cousin *ikitrum,* 'my (first) cousin'.

Sons and daughters

Parents often call their children by their personal names or by pet names, though they may also use the proper kin term, which is *itsu* (or *itso*) for a boy, and *itsulatpüh* (or *itsolatpüh*) for a girl. There are no general rules in this regard, and the usage varies from family to family. One's children are addressed collectively as *itsurü/itsularü*.

Nephews/nieces

The only specific term for nephews or nieces is *aphüli*, which can be glossed as 'sister's child', and this is used by males only. Parallel nephews are equated to the speaker's own children by both sexes, and female speakers may also address all their nephews and nieces by name or by using *itsuthre/itsulathre* ('my son/my daughter'), in the same way they address their own children.

Descendants from cousins

The children of a person's first cousins are equated terminologically with one's own children, i.e. they are addressed either as *itsu/itso* or *itsulatpüh* according to gender, or by their personal names.

Grandchildren

There are only two kin terms available to refer to a grandchild, and these are determined by the gender of the grandchild. *Ishumtsurü* is used in direct address for males and *ishumtsularü* for females. The corresponding terms of reference are *shumtsurü* and *shumtsularü*. In colloquial conversation, grandchildren and great grandchildren are usually called by their personal name. Great grandchildren are referred to as *shumtsurü anyü-u-chung* ('second grandson') for males and *shumtsurü anyü-u-chungtpüh* ('second granddaughter') for females. Terms for consanguines beyond the third descending generation do not occur.

b) Affines

The five elementary terms that are used by both Sangtam sections to denote ties of affinity are: *atsunya/atsunyatpü* ('child's spouse'), *axi/axitpü* ('sibling-in-law'), *ajangning* ('brother-in-law'), *ani/anitpü* ('spouse'), *aling* ('elder brother's wife', female speaking). The Eastern Sangtam use three additional terms: *anyi/anyü* (mother-in-law), *azuh* (wife's sibling-in-law), and *amari/amaritpüh* (children's parents-in-law).

Spouses

A Sangtam husband uses a specific term, *nütpa*, to address his wife, whilst the wife uses the term *nüo* to address her husband. In a referential context, *ani* and *anitpüh* stand respectively for husband and wife.

Spouses of uncles and aunts

The spouse of one's uncle, both paternal and maternal, are terminologically equated with one's mother (*atpah/aya*). As for uncles and aunts, these can be distinguished according to the relative age of the connecting relative to Ego's mother by the adjunction of the suffixes *-aziba* ('elder') or *-azaba* ('younger'), for example *atpah aziba* (or *aya aziba*) for FeBW and MeBW, *atpah azaba* (or *aya azaba*) for FyBW and MyBW. Husbands of maternal aunts are equated with the speaker's father (*au*) and are similarly differentiated according to the relative age of the connecting relative to Ego's father into *au aziba* (MeZH) and *au azaba* (MyZH). Husbands of paternal aunts, however, are treated as sister's husbands (*ajangning*) irrespective of their relative age to Ego's father.

Siblings' spouses

A male Ego addresses the wife of a brother as *ixitpü* ('my sister-in-law'), and refers to her as *axitpü*, irrespective of the brother's or his wife's relative age to Ego. A female Ego addresses her brother's wife by using the specific term, *iling*, for which the corresponding term of reference is *aling*. The husband of a sister is addressed as *ijangning* and referred to as *ajangning* by both sexes, but a female Ego can also address her sister's husband as *ika* or *ikü* ('maternal uncle'), while this male Ego can call her *ixitpüh*.

Spouses' siblings

A male Ego may address the brothers of his wife as *ijangning* ('my brother-in-law') and her sisters as *ixitpüh* ('my sister-in-law'), for which the corresponding terms of reference are *ajangning* and *axitpüh*. He may also address his wife's elder brother as 'maternal uncle', (*ika*), especially if the age difference between him and his brother-in-law is important. In informal or familiar conversations spouse's siblings may simply be called by their personal names, particularly younger ones. A female Ego addresses all brothers of her husband as ixi* *or* ixü** ('my brother-in-

law') and his sisters as *ixitpüh* ('my sister-in-law'), though, in a more familiar context, both can be called by name.

Cousins' spouses

Wives of paternal male cousins are treated as brother's wives (*axitpüh*), whereas husbands of paternal female cousins are terminologically equated with brothers-in-law (*ijang/ijangning*). Spouses of maternal cousins are treated as siblings among the Eastern Sangtam. Among the Western Sangtam, wives of maternal male cousins are also equated with sisters, i.e. they are addressed as *ifa/ifü* or *ini* according to their relative age to Ego. However, for the husbands of maternal female cousins two terms are used, depending upon whether either the bride or the bridegroom is from Ego's clan. Husbands of matrilateral cross-cousins are terminologically equated with sisters if they belong to Ego's clan, but with maternal uncles if they belong to any other clan. Similarly husbands of matrilateral parallel cousins are addressed as 'sisters' if they belong to Ego's clan but otherwise as *ijena* ('my friend').

Children' s spouses

The term *atsunya* is a specific term of reference for the spouse of one's children, and also stands for son-in-law (SW). The feminine form of this term is *astunyatpüh*, which refers to the daughter's husband. In direct address *itsunya* ('my son-in-law') and *itsunyatpü* ('my daughter-in-law') are used in a formal context, whereas in an informal or intimate context the children's spouses are mostly called by name.

Children's parents-in-law

The Eastern Sangtam also have a specific term for the parents-in-law of one's own children, which is *imari* in address and *amari* in reference. There are no special terms for the parents of the wife of one's son or the parents of the husband of one's daughter in the Western Sangtam section.

Parents-in-law and their siblings

Parents-in-law and their siblings are all denoted by using terms of consanguinity: both a male and a female Ego address and refer to their spouse's father as 'maternal uncle' (*iku/aku*) and address and refer to their spouse's mother as 'mother' (*itpa/iya//atpah/aya*). Similarly,

they equate their spouse's paternal uncles with maternal uncles and classify their spouse's aunts (both paternal and maternal) in the mother category. The spouse's maternal uncles are equated with one's father among the Eastern Sangtam, while the relationship is viewed as too far removed for the application of a kin term among the Western Sangtam.

Extension of kin-terms

a) to kin-related people
- A male Ego puts all male members of his clan who are of the same age group into the sibling or 'friend' (*ajüni/ajünah*) category;
- He puts all men of his mother's clan who are of his mother generation into the maternal uncle category (*akü/aka*), and all women of his mother's clan who are of his mother's generation into the mother-category (*atpah/aya*);
- He also puts all the male members of his wife's clan into the maternal uncle category;
- He uses the term *ijangning* ('my sister-in-law') to address all the female members of his wife's clan;
- Similarly a female Ego puts all female members of her clan who are of the same age group in the sibling category (*etpüh*);
- She puts all the male members of her husband's clan into the husband's brother-category (*axü*).

NB: The relationship terms *ajüni/ajünah* and *etphü* are used reciprocally.

b) General use of kinship terms for unrelated people
- Both male and female speakers address bosom friends from other clans than their own as *irangzu* or *irangza*, in order to express the closeness of the relationship;
- Elderly male persons are addressed as *ua* ('my father') irrespective of clan;
- Persons of the parental generation not belonging to Ego's clan are addressed as *ika* ('my maternal uncle');
- Persons of the children generation not belonging to Ego's clan are addressed as *ijena*, 'my friend'.

Discussion

The Sangtam kin terminology exhibits several features which differ strikingly from other Naga nomenclature. First, in contrast to all hitherto studied Naga terminologies, this is *not* a bifurcate merging system, i.e. it does not conform to the terminological equations

$$F = FB \neq MB$$
$$M = MZ \neq FZ^7$$

In the first ascending generation the nomenclatural system is neither bifurcate merging nor generational, but rather a combination of both: the father's brother is merged with the father (*au*) and the mother's sister with the mother (*atpah/aya*). But whereas there exists a specific term for maternal uncle (*akü*), the father's sister is merged with the mother:

$$M = MZ = FZ$$
$$[F = FB] \neq MB$$

As far as we know, no other Naga language terminologically equates the paternal aunt with the mother, with the possible exception of the Tikhir Nagas, on which information is scanty. It is all the more noteworthy that the term used for denoting the paternal aunt in various Naga languages, from proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) *ni(y) or *ney[8], is remarkably stable and well-attested in both languages of the Sal subfamily and those of the Kuki-Chin subfamily.

In most Naga nomenclature, patrilateral and matrilateral cross-cousins are also referred to by the same term, but they are terminologically differentiated from parallel cousins as well as from sisters. This cannot be said of the Sangtam. In Ego's own generation also the nomenclature is neither bifurcate merging nor generational, but the pattern exhibited here is different from that of the paternal generation: whereas the Sangtam equate patrilateral parallel cousins with siblings, matrilateral parallel cousins are classified along with cross-cousins (*kitrum*).
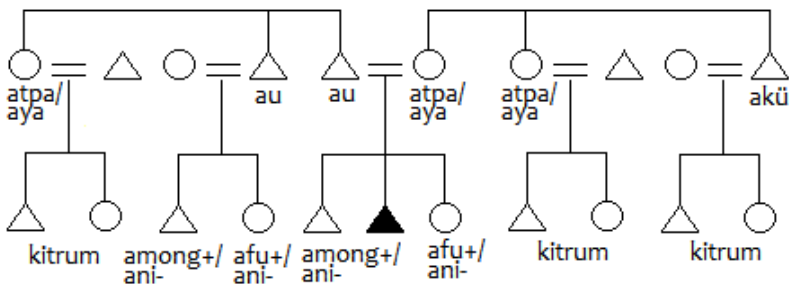
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7   On this point, see Bouchery and Gangmei (2008).

8   J. Matisoff (2003: 640).

$$P_p = Sb$$
$$X_p = X_m = P_m$$

This pattern has been labeled by Murdock in his *Ethnographical Atlas* as one among four types of 'unusual' cousin terminologies.[9] It is not found in any other known Naga tribe nor, in fact, in any ethnic group of Northeast India. What makes the Sangtam terminology stand out is the fact that the way of classifying parents' siblings at G+1 is not consistent with the way of classifying cousins at G0: whereas a man refers to the children of any man he calls 'father' as his 'brothers' or 'sisters', the children of any woman he calls 'mother' are his cousins (*kitrum*), not his siblings. Most Naga nomenclatures distinguish parallel cousins, who are equated with siblings, from cross-cousins. Here, simply no term exists for the 'cross-cousins'. And the father's sister is merged with the mother, notwithstanding the fact that her children are distinguished as cousins, not siblings. For that reason, the Sangtam terminological system also does not fit into any of Murdock's patterns for cross-cousins,[10] nor any of Shapiro's Iroquian subtypes.

A corollary of the merging of FZ with M can be found in the way the spouses of uncles and aunts are classified. Many Naga nomenclatures exhibit some symmetry in the classification of the kin-related people that would fall into the English categories 'uncle' and 'aunt'. For example:

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9   Murdock (1957: 673): 'Unusual cousin terminology in which ortho-cousins (those of Ego's lineage) are equated with siblings or half-siblings, all other cousins being differentiated therefrom and equated with one another.'
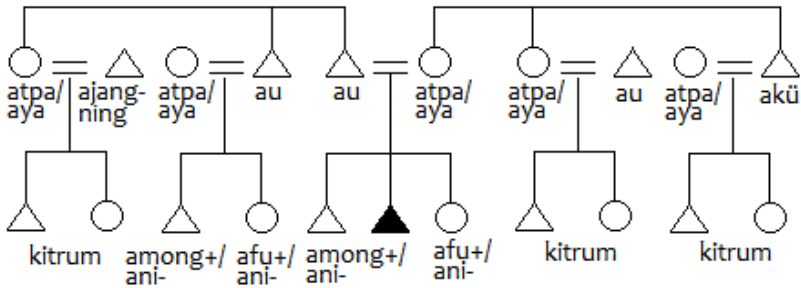10   Out of about 300 societies studied by Murdock in his World ethnographic sample, only two, namely the Minchia (Bai) and the Nayar, are of the same type (1957: 673).

F = MZH, M = FBW, FZ = MBW, MB = FZH (Chang, Khiamnungan)
FB = MZH, MZ = FBW, FZ = MBW, MB = FZH (Zemi, Liangmai, Rongmei)

The father's sister being terminologically equated with the mother among the Sangtam, one would logically expect:

FBW = MBW = M
FZH = MZH = F

However, this formula is only partially realized, since we have:

FBW = MBW = M
FZH ≠ (MZH = F)

Another interesting feature is the existence of two terms to denote siblings-in-law, *axi/axitpüh* and *ajangning.* These deserve particular attention, as this way of classifying is rather unusual in comparison to other Naga nomenclatural systems. This is not a distinction between 'brother-in law' and 'sister-in-law', nor is it a distinction based on the affinal *vs.* consanguineal character of the relation to the connecting relative, between 'sibling's spouses' and 'spouses' siblings'. It is also not just a matter of simply equating HB with BW on the one hand, and WZ with ZH on the other. *Axitpüh* primarily denotes, from a male ego's perspective, the in-married clanswomen, i.e. the women who have married a child of the agnatic line (brothers' and paternal cousins' wives, spouses of lineage or clan members). The wives of men born of women of an Ego's patrilineage, such as FZSW, also come under this purview, as also,

by extension, the wife's sisters and all the female members of the wife's clan. Married women simply follow their husbands in regarding both their spouse's brother's wife and their spouse's sisters as *axitpüh*.

Symmetrically, *ajangning* primarily denotes the married-out clanswomen, that is, for a male ego, the husbands of his classificatory sisters and of his paternal aunt (FZH, ZH, FBDH, etc.). The same way FZSW is included into the category *axitpüh*, FZH and (among Eastern Sangtam) FZDH are also regarded as *ajangning*. Thus the category comprises men who have married women of the agnatic line, and can be broadly equated with the patriline wife's takers. This is in no way specific to the Sangtam, as most Naga nomenclatures exhibit similar kin categories also corresponding to the wife's takers, which are differentiated from the wife's givers, especially the mother's brother's lineage. But in the majority of Naga groups, who favour the union with the matrilateral cross-cousin, the wife's takers and the wife's givers do not overlap. They do so among the Sangtam, as the category *ajangning* also includes WB, who represents the wife-giving patrikin. Symmetrically, the category *axitpüh* includes WZ, hence the equations:

$$WB = ZH$$
$$WZ = BW$$

These are suggestive of bilateral, rather than matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. Although the Sangtam nomenclature contains equations which are also shared by the vast majority of Naga terminologies that reflect preference for cross-cousin marriage of the matrilateral type, such as MBD = M, MB = WF, FZCh = ZCh (or GrCh), at the same time the Sangtam system offers strong presumptive evidence for the rules of marriage between bilateral cross-cousins, with the following equations:
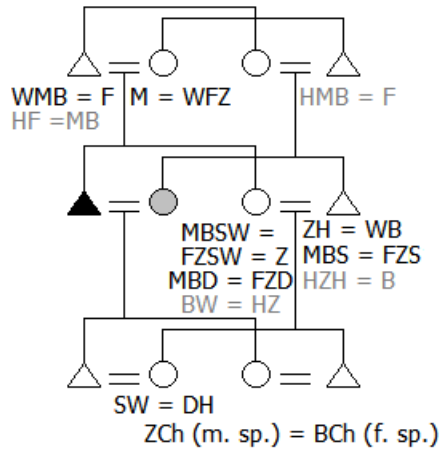
$$F = WMB = HMB$$
$$M = WFZ$$
$$ZH = WB$$
$$HF = MB$$
$$MBS = FZS$$
$$MBD = FZD$$
$$SW = DH$$

$$ZSW = D$$
$$ZDH = S$$
$$MBSW = FZSW = Z$$
$$BW \text{ (f. sp.)} = HZ$$
$$HZH = B$$
$$ZCh \text{ (m. sp.)} = BCh \text{ (f. sp.)}$$

This can be diagrammatically represented for male (in black) and female (in grey) Ego as below:

Undoubtedly, these are strong indices for inferring the practice of normative bilateral cross-cousin marriages. However, this particular type of preferential union (which corresponds to an exchange of sisters renewed from generation to generation) usually takes place in societies having two exogamous moieties, or between pairs of exogamous lineages. This is certainly not the case for the Sangtam Nagas, who have at least five major exogamous units and numerous non-exogamous subunits. The direct exchange of sisters, i.e. a man marrying his ZHZ, was forbidden in the past, and although the union of a man with his sister's husband's sister or brother's wife's sister is tolerated nowadays, none of these is a preferred spouse. Informants also deny the existence of any kind of regular preferential marriage between two clans, or two sets of clans.

In order to go any further, it is necessary to have a closer look at marriage

rules, as we know that even a consistently symmetric terminology can be associated with an asymmetric system of alliances.[11] Among the Sangtam there is no prescriptive marriage rule, and the choice of the spouse is governed only by a set of prohibitions. The first of these concerns clan exogamy: no member of a given patriclan (*ahong*) may marry a fellow clan member. This prohibition is followed by all Sangtam, Christians as well as non-Christians. Marriage within the same clan is considered as a taboo equivalent to incest, and is feared as it is believed that either the offspring would be handicapped or mentally affected, or the parental couple, whose union would not be blessed, might not live long. Informants say that, should marriage within the same clan occur, the couple would be debarred from all social activities, eventually driven out from the village and disowned by the village authorities. If this should occur to Christians, their names would also be struck from the church register. At any rate, the transgressing couple would be treated as unclean and no donation, tithes or any other offerings would be accepted from them.

Another major negative rule forbids the intermarriage between people who regard each other as *kitrum* ('first cousins'), that is, besides his FBD, a man cannot marry his actual FZD, MBD nor MZD. Informants are unanimous on this matter: '*Kitrumrü cannot intermarry*'. Prejudice against cross-cousin marriage and marriage between matrilateral parallel cousins takes the form of a taboo, and it is believed that such unions would result in the couple finding it impossible to have children. This was first noted by Archer in 1947[12], and the same statement was reiterated by our informants some sixty years later. Reluctance to marry the MBD in particular is explained by the ambivalent nature of the maternal uncle, and the fear of the uterine nephew of being too close in proximity to his MB. For whereas the maternal uncle has the responsibility to help, guide and support his sister's children in every walk of life,[13] at the same time informants readily point out that a quarrel, mark of disrespect, act of disobedience, or anything done by the uterine nephew that can make the

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11   For example the Garo. See Needham (1966).

12   'Manuscript notes by W.G Archer between 1946 and 1948, and miscellaneous papers and letters'. Retrieved from Naga Database website, http://tartarus.org/richard/naga/export/coll/4/xcontents/detail/all/index.html

13   The MB has the right to request assistance of his sister's children, and the latter are expected to help the former regularly. Uterine nephews also send over a piece of meat for every major festival to their maternal uncle.

maternal uncle unhappy would entail sickness: '*if a person disregards his mother's brother he/she will face sickness* (*thse-zhumnung*)'. Correspondingly, whenever a person is sick, it is generally acknowledged that this may be the result of a bad relationship with the MB.[14] Informants thus explain that marriage with the MBD would increase the risk of a dispute between the maternal uncle and his uterine nephew.[15]

A third major prohibition pertains to marriage with the patrilateral cross-cousin. As per tradition, not only is a man forbidden to marry his actual FZD, but this prohibition extends to the agnatic descendants of a man and his sister (respectively male and female) up to the seventh generation. Although this rule is no longer strictly followed in the present day, social prejudice nevertheless remains strong. The reluctance of males to marry into their paternal aunt's patriline is explained by a feeling of consanguinity which is obviously stronger from the paternal side. Conversely, whereas a man is forbidden to marry his MBD, the former's son may marry the latter's daughter, at any rate unions between matrilateral cross-cousins of the third degree are allowed. Information regarding marriage regulations between descendants of sisters is currently unavailable.[16]

The fact that marriage cannot take place between first cousins does not preclude the occurrence of matrilateral and bilateral unions, and in fact there are grounds to seriously consider, a marriage between second cross-cousins (but not between first cross-cousins). Firstly, the Sangtam regard the marriage of a man with his MFBSD as a good union. In this type of marriage, which corresponds to an union between the children of two female cross-cousins, a male Ego marries not the daughter of his actual MB, but the daughter of one of his MB's paternal parallel cousins. The rationale behind this preference is that the MFBSD will have a keen interest to take care of his husband's mother, as that mother hails from

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14 In olden days the maternal uncle, or at any rate a representative of the mother's clan, had to provide a medicinal plant called *sami* (*Rhus semialata*, Murr.) to get the uterine nephew/niece healed.

15 A somewhat similar situation has been observed by Mills among the Rengma and the Sumi (1937: 137).

16 Cf. Hutton (1921: 134n1): 'The Changs bar marriage between the males of any clan and the descendant of females of the same patrilineal clan to the fourth generation, and although recently in some cases the bar has been reduced to two generations by rebellious individuals, this is regarded as dangerous and objectionable.'

her family. Secondly, though marriage between matrilateral parallel first cousins is barred, it is allowed for their children, meaning that a man is permitted to marry his FMZDD. Informants emphasize that marriage can and does occur between descendants of *kitrumrü* and *kitrumlarü* from the first generation onwards, and that such unions are contracted in order to maintain a close relationship between the two families. In particular, marriage between two persons whose maternal grandmothers are sisters (i.e. a man marrying his MMZSD), or whose paternal grandmothers are sisters (a man marrying his FMZSD) is allowed, as is the marriage of a man with his FMBDD and even his FFBDD. With marriage between first cousins being prohibited, the nearest potential spouse to foster and maintain ties of solidarity between families becomes a second parallel or cross-cousin, as long as clan exogamy is respected.

Such reversals of alliance kinship can be inferred from the terminology itself, especially from the existence of two terms for the wife of any *kitrum*, depending on whether she does or does not belong to the speaker's clan. Thus the husbands of MBD, MZD are treated as 'brothers' (*ama/among/ani*) if they belong to Ego's clan. Similarly the husband of FZD is called 'son' (*atsu*) if he is of Ego's clan, and 'brother-in-law' if he is of a clan other than Ego. These are clear indications that marital unions can take place with more distant cousins who are related to Ego either patrilineally or matrilineally[17]. Moreover, if the FZDH, or MBDH, belongs to Ego's clan, as pointed out by Lévi-Strauss (1949), the pattern of exchange is no longer unilateral but becomes bilateral.

Conclusion

Naga kinship systems are highly diverse, and the Sangtam terminology provides a new, hitherto unknown model, although it shares some features with the nomenclatural system of the Sangtam's immediate neighbours. Like the Lhota, Ao, Rengma and Angami, the the Sangtam terminology has two terms for 'mother' that differ according to clan affiliation[18], though in the case of the Sangtam the usage of the distinct terms is not confined to a particular subdivision but occurs throughout the whole tribe. Along with the Lhota and Ao systems, the Sangtam system exhibits the same duality

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17 Similarly among the Western Sangtam, the mother's sister's husband is called 'father' (*au*) if he belongs to the father's clan, but as 'maternal uncle' (*aka/akü*) if he does not.

18 Mills (1922: XXXI-XXXII).

regarding the identification of certain kin relatives, i.e. the existence of two or more terms for the one degree of kinship according to whether the named relative belongs to Ego's clan, Ego's father's clan or Ego's mother's clan. In common with their neighbours the Ao and the Chang, the Sangtam have specific terms for nephews and nieces which are further differentiated according to the speaker's sex: as mentioned above, a male speaker calls his uterine nephews and nieces by specific terms, whereas a female Ego simply calls them as her own children[19]. This coincides well with bilateral cross-cousin marriage, and indeed the Sangtam terminology, like that of the Chang and the Khiamnungan Nagas further east, exhibits a profusion of equivalences which are all suggestive or marriage between bilateral cross-cousins. But as far as we know, a system of symmetric alliances involving the exchange of classificatory sisters is attested only among the Khiamnungan, whose clans are grouped into two exogamous moieties, and only an extensive genealogical investigation can tell us to what extent the Sangtam and the Chang follow some kind of bilateral marriage system. The only thing that can be tentatively stated is that their consistently symmetric terminology does not seem to be in line with their marriage rules or marriage practices. Only with their eastern neighbours the Tikhir do the Sangtam share the absence of a specific kin term to denote the paternal aunt, and therefore, by contrast with all other Naga groups their kin terminology is not of the bifurcate-merging type. Most importantly, the Sangtam have their own unique way of classifying cousins which has no equivalent among the Nagas or among any of the neighbouring societies of the Indo-Burmese region, and this feature alone makes the Sangtam kinship system stand out from among other Naga kinship systems.

As atypical as it may be, the Sangtam kin terminology fits rather well into the model proposed by Lévi-Strauss in his *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949). According to Lévi-Strauss all Naga kinship systems present the same hybrid character, exhibiting some features corresponding to a simple formula of restricted exchange or bilateral marriage, and other features corresponding to generalized exchange or asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage. As noted above, the possiblity that FZDH and MBDH

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19   Sangtam: *phuli*; Chang: *li*; Ao Chungli: *anok/amu*; Ao Mongsen: *kümnak/kümo*; Ao Changki: *kümnak/kümo.*

belong to Ego's clan found among the Sangtam points to a bilateral exchange pattern, as do numerous equations of the Sangtam terminology. At the same time, considering Sangtam cross-cousin marriage, there is a clear asymmetry in prohibition degrees between the paternal and maternal lines, with the possibility for a man to marry the granddaughter of his father's maternal uncle (FMBDD) whereas, on the paternal side, similar unions between descendants of cousins are barred for six generations. But, in contrast with many Naga groups, such an asymmetry takes place in the absence of any prescriptive or preferential marriage rule, and may reflect more of a compromise between competitive objectives: on the one hand the desire to strengthen existing kin ties through marriage, on the other hand the wish to avoid the reduplication of affinal bonds from the father's side.

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