

Segmentation, spatiality¹ and unilineal descent: Social organisation in the highlands of north-western Tunisia

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1. Introduction

From the point of view of the anthropological theory of social organisation, the social position of individuals in a society may be described by reference to at least three types of socially relevant attributes:

- (1) Attributes attached to the individual in an objective way, without reference to other individuals or groups: gender, age, material wealth, etc. These attributes are distributed according to the category systems provided by a certain society, or as the case may be, by a scientific investigator of this society, i.e. an ethnographer.
- (2) Attributes defined by reference to other individuals: 'friend', 'colleague', 'neighbour', 'mother's brother'; all these attributes require further specification as to whose friend, etc. They describe a subject (Ego) in relation to his social surroundings; they are ego-centred (*cf.* Mitchell 1963; Boissevain 1968). A society (or the ethnographer of that society) possesses a category system to describe these attributes, in other words to classify them, and to indicate which relationship exists between which individuals. Some important principles in such a category system are:
 - *kinship* (defining such relationships as formulated by indigenous kinship terminology, or by generalised anthropological translations of such terminology, such as 'mother's brother');
 - *spatiality* (defining the relationship of 'neighbours');
 - *the quality of actual interaction*

(defining such relationships as: friend, enemy, acquaintance, patron versus client, etc.).

- (3) Attributes attached to individuals by reference to certain explicitly recognised groups. These are group-orientated attributes, if we consider a group to be: a set of individuals which is unambiguously defined, either within an indigenous category system or within the analytical category system used by the ethnographer.

This definition of group does not require actual interaction and mutual identification among the members; some groups however display the latter features, and might be called social groups.

For any individual a group-orientated attribute simply states: 'this individual belongs to that group'. An indigenous category system of group-orientated attributes defines:

- the several types of groups;
- the ways in which these groups are mutually exclusive, hierarchically inclusive, or overlapping;
- the recruitment of these groups.

Kinship and spatiality are among the important principles shaping indigenous group-orientated category systems in different societies. An ethnographer can devise a analytical equivalent of the indigenous group-orientated category system: a translation, in scientifically defined terms, of the indigenous system, with explicit statement of the rules of its indigenous application. In order to explain actual interaction, however, one is often compelled to use not an indigenous, but an analytical group-orientated category system (e.g. in terms of kin groups, or social stratification); in that case, equivalence

¹ In this English translation, the original term 'territorialiteit/territoriality' has been replaced by 'spatiality'.

of analytical concepts with indigenous ones should not be the ethnographer's main concern.

Discussions on segmentation consist of statements about group-orientated category systems, either indigenous or analytical ones. Obviously the concept of segmentation can never provide an exhausting analysis of any system of social organisation: both objective and ego-centred individual attributes remain out of scope. Yet this concept turned out to be a particularly useful tool for the description of many societies; just as the concepts of gender and of patronage may provide analyses which are at the same time highly illuminating and non-exhaustive.

The concept of spatiality, as I shall use it in my argument, refers to the social aspect of the spatial distribution of people.

That spatiality is of main importance to any form of social organisation was already stated by Maine (1861: 128f). Kroeber returned to the same point of view when reviewing the first decades of scientific anthropology:

'Traits having to do with what we may call formal social organisation – clan, moiety, exogamy, unilateral descent reckoning, totemism – which theoretical ethnologists have been so excited about for two or three generations, form part of the secondary pattern of culture; (...) They are in a sense epiphenomena to other, underlying phenomena, such as place of residence. This is in one way inevitable, because while one must live somewhere, one can live without artificial exogamous groupings, descent reckoning, or totems; co-residence necessarily brings associations which have social influence: just as one must have kin, but need not have clans' (Kroeber 1938: 307f).

Radcliffe-Brown (1940: xiv) made the same point:

'Every human society has some sort of territorial structure. (...) This territorial structure provides the framework, not only for the political organisation (...), but for other forms of social organisation also, such as economic, for example. The system of local aggregation and segregation (...) is the basis of all social life.'

This insight was never challenged. On the other hand, this 'basis of all social life' was scarcely investigated empirically. Precisely by virtue of this complication and inner contradiction, Kroeber's 'secondary patterns' continued to be tremendously attractive. Recent social research pays little attention to spatiality. However, a limited number of publications³, demonstrate the significance of spatiality as a principle for individual behaviour and for ego-centred relationships; spatiality as a principle in group-orientated category systems however has largely remained out of scope.

Meanwhile recently anthropologists' traditional interest in group-orientated attributes is beginning to

² I.e., recent ca. 1970, when this was written. A similar caveat should be inserted wherever a date or period is indicated in this text.

³ Stouffer 1940; Loomis & Beegle 1950; Festinger, Schachter & Back 1950. Cf. Zipf 1949: 406; and quite a number of studies on the impact of propinquity on mate selection, cf. Jacobsohn & Matheny 1963: 104; Aldous & Hill 1967: 149, and references cited there.

wane (Boissevain 1968: 544). Many authors turned to the investigation of networks and quasi-groups. The investigation of group-orientated category systems, based not upon kinship but upon spatiality, may be an additional way out. The present study seeks to explore this second possibility. It was only when I had returned from the field and had drafted the outlines of my analysis of Ḥumiri social organisation, that I read Leach's fascinating discussion of the Sri Lankan village of Pul Elīyya (1968). Although Sri Lanka and north-western Tunisia differ widely in ecology, and although Leach's emphasis is not upon segmentation, there is a considerable convergence between our arguments.

2. Segmentation theory

The concept of segmentation goes back to Durkheim (1893: 150f; 1901: 82f), who acknowledged only one type of segments (clans), all on the same level and inwardly unsegmented. Nowadays this concept of segmentation is hardly in use.⁴

A different concept of segmentary structures has been playing an important role in anthropology since the research of Evans-Pritchard among the Nuer and of Fortes among the Tallensi.⁵ Besides these pioneers, unnumbered other authors published on the subject, both ethnographic applications and theoretical discussions. In the years 1940-1960 a classic theory of segmentary systems emerged; it is still used and discussed.⁶

The concept of segmentation defines a particular structural model. The features of this model are the following:

- The elements in this structure are segments.
- These segments are distributed over several hierarchical levels.
- One segment on a higher level contains at least one segment of a lower level.
- Segments on the same level are defined to be mutually unambiguously exclusive (segmentary opposition).
- The segments are linked by one, constant, structural principle.

The structural model can be represented by a tree Figure, or dendrogram. Many scientific disciplines make use of dendrograms; one of the characteristics of the tree-like structural model of the segmentation theory is that the elements in that structure are sets of people, both demarcated and united by an anthropologically-defined structural principle (such as unilineal descent). Within the universal set (a society), part sets are formed on several levels; part sets on the same level being mutually discriminated by an individual name. Who forms these part sets, and what is their nature?

Considering the ways anthropologists have used

⁴ However, a modern example is: Theodorson & Theodorson 1969: 373.

⁵ Evans-Pritchard 1940a, 1940b, 1951; Fortes 1940, 1945, 1949.

⁶ Important statements of classic segmentation theory include: Fortes & Evans-Pritchard 1940b: 516; Gluckman 1950; Fortes 1953; Middleton & Tait 1958; Sigrist 2005; Gellner 1969: 35-69. Some other relevant publications will be discussed below.

the concept of segmentation, this question has at least three possible answers:

- (Type I) The part sets are defined by the actors. The structural model contains the indigenous conception of society, in the local language. This corresponds to what Firth (1957: 7) called a 'segmentation charter'.
- (Type II) The structural model is a analytical description of the indigenous categories, systematised by the ethnographer using formal academic language, which is often not only in style, register and precision, but also in language group, language family, and political significance, different from the language used by the actors. The part sets are still indigenously defined groups. The structural model is a systematised equivalent of the actors' conception of society.
- (Type III) The part sets have been defined by the ethnographer himself with scientific precision and in such a way as to facilitate the ethnographer's description and explanation of the social phenomena observed. This is Firth's 'segmentation model' (1957: 7). The check of type III lies in systematically collected empirical data on day-to-day interaction, – and not (as for types I and II) in the best possible fit with the indigenous model.

The underlying distinction (between types I and II on the one hand, and III on the other) has been a common one in anthropology, both classic and modern; e.g. it is recently advocated by the school of ethnoscience or new ethnology, in terms of the distinction between emic (I & II) and etic (III).

In any analytical description of a society in terms of classic segmentation theory, we find type II or type III. Thus a double problem arises:

- The indigenous groups of type II are not ipso facto identical to the sets of type III: the latter are more precisely defined, possibly by reference to a different structural principle.
- Hence follows a necessary discrepancy, usually very great, between the indigenous notions about the functioning of society on the one hand, and the description of actual functioning, based on systematic analysis of observed social phenomena, on the other hand.

This point requires a concrete example: *The Nuer* by Evans-Pritchard (1940b). Evans-Pritchard's project was the analysis of such important phenomena as violent conflicts, their regulation, the sets of people involved, and the ways in which these people were grouped into solidary units. His solution was the idea of interplay between two segmentary models: a spatial one (tribes, segmented into localised sets of people), and one based on unilineal descent (clans, segmented into set of people linked by a common notion of patrilineal descent – whether historical or fictitious). Though Evans-Pritchard does not state this explicitly, both segmentary models belong to type III, for in indigenous Nuer notions nothing can be found that equals two separate and consequently developed segmentation models, each

having its own, consequently applied, structural principle in the indigenous notions. But only for spatiality there exists an indigenous segmentary model, including formulations in terms of segmentary opposition (*cf.* Evans-Pritchard 1940: 143). As far as the Nuer perceive clans and lineages,

'...they do not represent them (...) as a series of bifurcations of descent, as a tree of descent, or as a series of triangles of descent, but as a number of lines running at angles from a common point. (...) They see it [the system – WvB] primarily as actual relations between groups of kinsmen within local communities rather than as a tree of descent...' (Evans-Pritchard 1940b: 202).

Among the Nuer, unilineal descent does not lead towards an indigenous segmentary model.

Evans-Pritchard's approach is a favourable exception in its emphasis on spatial organisation; moreover it has the insight that it does not claim segments to be corporate groups (Evans-Pritchard: 1940b: 203, 264). Nonetheless, these specific features have been subsequently underplayed and the professional perception of Evans-Pritchard's works, and these, along with those of Fortes (1940, 1945, 1949, 1953), are truly basic for classic segmentation theory, with its central focus on descent as a governing principle.

Classic segmentation theory (including *The Nuer*) often overlooks the fundamental difference between the types II and III. Instead of acknowledging the necessary discrepancy between I and II versus III, implicitly the authors assume identity between the blurred, shifting, ambiguous indigenously defined groups and the well-defined sets of people that appear in their own abstract statements about structure and function in the societies described; consequently these authors endeavour to make their analysis as congruent as possible with the indigenous notions about the functioning of society.

Classic segmentation theory adopted two elements that had been dominant in anthropology for many years: the stress upon unilineal descent, and the stress upon corporate groups. Unilineal descent was claimed to be the only structural principle capable of meeting the condition of unambiguous definition of segments on the same structural level. Spatiality as a structural principle was just mentioned as a more theoretical possibility (Middleton & Tait 1958: 7; Gellner 1969: 48), or explicitly dismissed (Fortes 1953, 36f; Favret 1966: 107f, 1968: 20f). Hence discussions wholly concentrated on the segmentary lineage model. The segmentary dendrogram exclusively took the form of a genealogy, where the position of an ancestor represents the segmentary position of the segment associated with this ancestor. Segmentary opposition was formulated in terms of sibling relationships (or half-sibling relationships: 'complementary filiation') between ancestors.

Moreover these lineage segments came to be represented, ethnographically, as corporate groups. Thus the structural model is not only a tool which enables the actors (or the ethnographer) to divide people in a society over some hierarchically inclusive part sets; the segments are, in addition, supposed to present themselves as a unity to the outside world, with regard to land rights, marriage ties, economic and political co-operation, conflicts, etc. the structural model is held to be extremely relevant for day-to-day interaction.

In section 3 I shall indicate the empirical

conditions implied in this point of view.

Descriptions in terms of the classic theory tend to stress the corporate nature of segments especially on the lower levels. Here always the spatial factor enters into the picture. The relation between lineage segments and local communities becomes an ever-recurring topic; residents not belonging to the dominant local lineage, and non-resident lineage members tend to present analytical difficulties. Several authors (Fried 1957: 20f; Leach 1961: 56f)⁷ took localisation of a lineage segment as a condition for its corporateness. Yet one did not arrive at exploring spatiality as a primary, even highly independent structural principle. Leach (1968: 305) makes the same point.

In ethnographical descriptions emulating the classic model the segmentary lineage appears as of crucial importance for strategic points in the social organisation: access to natural resources, inheritance, dwelling pattern, the course of day-to-day interaction, marriage systems, religious behaviour. The segmentary organisation defines for any situation a set of people who, as a distinct segment, can identify mutually against the other, competing segments on the same level. Segmentary organisation therefore becomes the most important form of political integration (through mobilisation) in those societies where individual differences in affluence and in political authority are little developed. Many authors have stressed this aspect of segmentary organisation – to such an extent that (in deviation from class theory) some (e.g. Southall n.d.: 241f; Sahlins 1961: 336f) have presented segmentary organisation exclusively as a political system in the narrower sense.

The processual nature of segmentation has likewise formed an important topic. In the competition between segments at the same segmentary level one segment tends to be more successful than the others in the long run. This results in a gradual change in the segmentary position of that segment: its name and apical ancestor may be retained, but they are given a different place in the dendrogram. In segmentary lineages this turns out to lead to a constant adaptation of genealogies, which therefore no longer contain historical information in the objective, analytical sense. In stead, the genealogies become statements ('charters') for the structural relations between segments at a particular moment of time (Bohannan 1952). Of equal importance in segmentary dynamics is the constant emergence of new segments at the lowest level of segmentation: the nuclear families of new generations. (Cf. diagrams 1 and 3).⁸

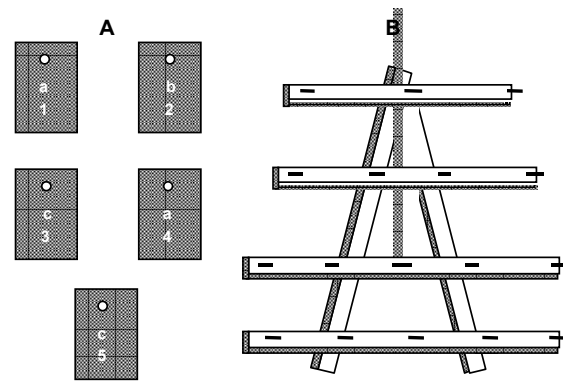


Figure 1. Basic elements in a segmentary structure:
A: a number of essentially identical social groups that can occupy any place in a framework of social organisation; B: the framework of social organisation

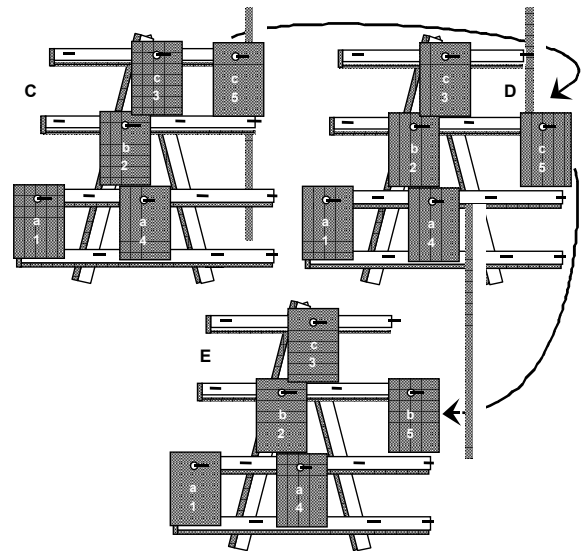


Figure 2. Diagrammatic representation of segmentary dynamics

group c5 can no longer maintain itself at the top level of the segmentary framework, and is demoted one level down; as a result, c5's identity is changed: its attributes are brought in agreement with those of the other groups at this level, so c5 becomes b5.

This classic model has come to belong to the anthropologist's standard interpretational framework. According to some authors it has often been used in too abstract a fashion; in the same vein, it is claimed that both its spatial distribution as its explanatory power have been overestimated.⁹ Here I will focus on only two aspects of the discussion on segmentation theory.

⁷ Southall (1959) disagrees with Fried (1957: 20) in this interpretation of Leach (1961: 56f) However, Southall does not specifically argue the relative unimportance of localisation of lineage systems, but concentrates upon the juridical status of women in such systems.

⁸ Diagrams 1 and 2 are newly added to the English translation.

⁹ Cf. Gluckman 1950; Worsley 1956; Smith 1956; Barnes 1962; Gluckman (1961) and van Velsen (1967) point essentially in the same direction, in their pleas for an extensive case method which is to demonstrate the flexibility of the structural model.

Beyond unilineal descent

Goody (1957) breaks with the one-sided stress on unilineal descent as a structural principle for segmentation. He classifies segmentary systems.

'... in terms of the groups to which major importance is attached in the total system of social control. These may be: i. Unilineal descent groups; ii. Other kin groups; iii. Age sets; iv. Special selective associations, either "secret societies" or village councils; v. Local ritual congregations. Any particular system of social control may involve more than one such set of groups.' (1957: 103).

I return to this approach in section 6 below

The place of non-unilineal descent

Initially the classic model brought about confusion as to non-unilineal systems of descent. Problems in this field came nearer to a solution when the ethnographers realised that the classic model failed to distinguish between indigenous notions (types I and II), and analytical description (type III). Unilineality, ever so stressed in classic theory, turned out to be an indigenous ideology, and not always an independent, let alone a crucial, determinant for day-to-day interaction.¹⁰ A recent paper even denies the strict unilineality of this classic paradigm of segmentation theory: the Tallensi (Keesing 1970).

Here Sahlins (1965) made an important contribution. Departing from historically correct genealogical data, he shows how minimal genealogical manipulations, of types often described in anthropological literature, are sufficient to arrive at the following arrangements: cognatic descent groups, segmentary lineage system, non-local clans, local clan phratry system.

By another path (the analysis of the feud among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica) Peters (1967) too put his finger on the confusion between indigenous ideology and analytical description in classic theory; after many years of interpreting his data according to classic theory (Peters 1951, 1960).

'What I am arguing is (...) that the lineage model (...) does not provide an admissible basis for analysis. (...) My objection to the use which has been made of a people's ideology of their relationships is that it has been elevated from its status as a component of social life to such a position of universal dominance that all sets of social relationships that "every sociological problem", as Fortes writes of the Tallensi, "hinges of the lineage system"' (Peters 1967: 279; cf. Fortes 1945: 30).

3. Classic segmentation theory operationalised

Turning now to empirical research, we have to ask: what data do we need, in order to be allowed to describe a society in terms of segmentary lineage organisation?

The aim of our description is a structural model of type III: the segments, on several levels, are hierarchically inclusive sets of unilineal kinsmen, and we must demonstrate that this structure is crucial for day-to-day interaction.

There are two (often insufficiently distinguished) possible ways of operationalising unilineal descent (cf. McArthur 1967):

- a) As actual, historical genealogical links between individuals
- b) As actors' notions about genealogical links between individuals, regardless of) historical factuality

For our purposes, operationalisation (a) is essentially wrong. Genealogical links can only be relevant for day-to-day interaction, if the actors perceive them explicitly and consider them in their motivations and interactions. People that more or less share the same genetic material because they have one or more parents and/or higher-level ancestors in common, and people who have no genetic material in common and yet identify as kin (adoptive, step-, putative, fictive, classificatory) etc., tend to interact in quite a similar manner to that of genetically-based kin. Biological kin do not possess some instinctive preference for mutual interaction, yet tend to interact because they perceive each other as kin. Therefore we take operationalisation (b); I shall soon return to (a).

If the relevance for day-to-day interaction depends on the way in which actors perceive one another according to unilineal descent, then we may expect that the actors have some explicit model of segmentation based on unilineal descent (type I). Yet description (type II) of this indigenous model is not a necessary step in our analysis.

On the other hand, to arrive at model III the empirical data should lead to unambiguous verification of the following hypotheses. (Here I take 'genealogical knowledge' to be: the notions of one individual actor about genealogical links between people in his social surroundings).

- For adult members of the society described, genealogical knowledge is such as to enable the actor to classify all people with whom he regularly interacts, either according to precisely stated lines of descent (consisting of links between parents and children) or according to stipulated lines of descent (consisting of links with a mythical ancestor, i.e. by means of clan membership).
- Genealogical knowledge is more or less consensual.' (If not so, unilineal descent would not provide the interacting individuals with shared frames of reference to co-ordinate their interaction, and by consequence unilineal descent as such could not be an independent determinant for interaction). Concretely, this condition comprises the following: 'there is consensus about which different, named descent groups are existing'; 'there is consensus about the nature of the genealogical relationship between these groups'; 'there is consensus about which specific individuals in the past and at

¹⁰ Meggitt 1965; Murphy & Kasdan 1959, 1967; further references in: Befu 1965: 145; Tyler 1967: 340f.

present belong to which one of these groups.

- For several forms of day-to-day interaction the observed recruitment of people to (certain roles within) this interaction can be described adequately in terms of this structure of descent groups. (This hypothesis can be tested, among other ways, by quantitative analysis of the recruitment of actors in the observed types of interaction).

In a society these three conditions can be fulfilled, irrespective of the objective historical truth of the actors' genealogical knowledge.

Yet it is important to ascertain the factual genealogical links. This information is necessary for the reconstruction of residential history of local groups, and for insight into the social-structural background of the (conscious or unconscious) genealogical manipulation leading to the non-historical genealogical notions of the actors. These manipulations are not as likely for all degrees of kinship: two true siblings are far more likely to be perceived in their actual genealogical relationship by themselves and by their contemporaries, than two men who are merely each other's FFFBSSSS. This implies that consensus is maximal for close kinsmen. Consensus, and match with historical factuality, in the case of close kinsmen justify the use of objective historical kinship links (once established) as an operationalisation for the actors' genealogical knowledge. For close kinsmen we may to a considerable extent approach operationalisation b by a; but for less close kinsmen this is definitely not allowed.

Establishing the objective genealogical links is a problem in itself. In segmentary societies genealogical links are rarely stated in writing, so that the ethnographer has to rely on the actors' oral information. The more remote the kinship link, the less correct and, probably, the less consensual this information will be. But provided that the ethnographer collects a great deal of genealogical information on the same set of people, he may succeed in more or less reconstructing historically true genealogies (*cf.* section 7).

So far it is clear that the confusion of ethnographer's analytical model and indigenous model, in the classic segmentation theory, needs not always to be disastrous, yet may lead to great methodological problems.

Now we can turn towards segmentary social organisation in north-western Tunisia.

4. The Highlands of North-western Tunisia (Ḥumiriyya): Introduction

Ḥumiriyya, the highlands of north-western Tunisia that are described in this book, is an area with narrow valleys and steep slopes, covered with forests. The population speaks an Arabic dialect and confesses a popular version of Islam. The population is concentrated in villages, surrounded by fields, pastures and forests. In the research area in the narrower sense (12 square kilometres), the density of population was about 60 inhabitants per square kilometre in 1968. Considering the limited carrying capacity of the mountain slopes, the fact that a considerable part of the research area has been turned into a forest reserve, which is not accessible to the local population for productive use, and the fact that subsistence agriculture is the standard means of

livelihood, this population density indicates severe overpopulation. Animal husbandry and tilling of cereals, vegetables and tobacco - and, in addition, unemployment relief work - provide a usually very small income. At two hours' walking distance (hardly any villagers can afford the bus fare, and even if they could it would take them an hour to reach the bus stop), is the urban centre of Ayn Drahem lies (about 5,000 inhabitants in 1968), with a weekly market, shops, public services, and the regional centre of administration. The link between the government and the rural population is a government-appointed salaried petty official, a prominent local person in whose position nearly all powers of administration and the maintenance of law and order are concentrated at the local level. In view of the fact that this is an office created by the colonial government shortly after the imposition of colonial rule, and by analogy with other colonial situations in Africa and Asia, this official may conveniently be designated as *chief*; this is the term we shall henceforth employ for this office. Its Arabic designation is *shaykh*. In order to avoid the likely (and at the time politically undesirable) fusion of this term with self-styled political and religious leadership at the local level, from 1969 this office within the local government structure of the Republic of Tunisia was designated *umda*.

When the French conquered this region in 1881, the Ḥumiriṭs in their tents lived a semi-nomadic life, concentrating on goat herding. They formed an egalitarian tribal society. (In present-day Ḥumiriyya some traces of ancient tribal divisions still remain, but nowadays these have scarcely any significance and they will not be discussed here). Exclusive, but continuously challenged rights over pastures, arable fields, gardens, orchards, threshing-floors and springs, linked a group to its territory; moreover, this territory contained the groups' shrine, the adjacent cemetery, and the cleared spot for the men's assembly. Armed conflicts were no exception. They were regulated, to some degree, by men of high prestige, who often were members of religious brotherhoods and wardens of local shrines. The influence of central government (Tunis) was minimal.

Ayn Drahem was founded as a garrison town. In 1883 the French appointed the first chiefs. Using Ayn Drahem as a bridgehead, the region was very slowly brought under effective French rule, but the imposition of a monopoly on violence which this entailed, took more than twenty years to be established. After 1900 a few colonists settled. Population increased rapidly but the agricultural area could not be expanded correspondingly: few slopes with good springs were still available for clearing, and besides the French government restricted further clearing. Land became more and more scarce, and was used more and more intensively. This caused rapid erosion. About 1930 a cattle pest decimated the flocks. The tents gave way to huts and stone houses. The villages consolidated on their present places. Horticulture, and not husbandry, became the main point in the family economy. Many people moved to the immediate proximity of Ayn Drahem and to further urban centres. Now that natural resources (land) were no longer open, a greater differentiation of affluence developed, principally in favour of the chiefs and their close relatives. The rise of Ayn Drahem as a market and a tourist resort provided some others too with economic opportunities. The development of a distinct class of (relatively affluent and powerful people was accelerated since Tunisia's independence (1956). On the

one hand, the party organisation and relief work organisation supplied educated Ḥumirī with positions of power. On the other hand a large re-afforestation project limited the agricultural area even further, and as a corollary to this project government imposed severe limitations on local goat husbandry. As a result, the economic situation of the majority of the population deteriorated even further.

The following analysis is not an attempt to reconstruct pre-colonial Ḥumirī society. I will discuss the social organisation in present Ḥumirīyya, which (as the above sketch shows) differs greatly from the pre-colonial one. Neither do I attempt to explain the present situation from historical changes (*cf.* section 7). Moreover I will limit my analysis to the rural village, even though present-day Ḥumirīyya is a peasant society which could only be completely analysed in its relation to urban centres, within a wider social structure. But, though the crucial factors in the life of the present Ḥumirī are located mainly outside his own village (notably in national and international economic and political structures), yet this life takes place almost completely in his own village, while the indigenous conception of society does hardly reach any further.

I must add that the abundance of information now available for this region shows a rather great local diversity both in culture and in social organisation; therefore my own analysis applies only for a cluster of five villages (about 7 kilometres north-east of Ayn Draham).

In this paper I cannot but give final conclusions; the reader be assured that these conclusions are based on intensive, partly quantitative, analysis of a great deal of data.

5. Unilineal Descent in Ḥumirīyya

When I started to investigate Ḥumirī social organisation, the segmentary lineage model was my point of departure. For this model had been applied many times on Arabic societies, both nomads and peasants, in North Africa and elsewhere.¹¹ Within the Tunisia project of the University of Amsterdam, this model had also been applied to Ḥumirīyya (e.g. Hartong 1968: 53).

On first inspection, presentday Ḥumirī notions with regard to their society correspond with the segmentary lineage model. According to Ḥumirī ideology, patrilineal descent creates solidary groups on several levels and is thus the most important social-structural principle, both in the past and at present: it furnishes a common denominator for the residential history of local groups, for inheritance, for patterns of for co-residence and of day-to-day co-operation, for marriage ties and for religious actions.

This indigenous conception should however *not* be taken as an essentially correct analysis of Ḥumirī society, that, if anything, only requires translation in terms of current social-scientific discourse.

One of the keys to an understanding of the true

significance of the indigenous model of social organisation lies in Ḥumirī genealogical practice. The indigenous model of unilineal descent segmentation recognises several types of agnatic links, and - although not distinguished by separate indigenous terms - several types of ancestors. In the upper positions of the genealogies are the mythical ancestors, who allegedly lived in the indefinitely remote past, are from unknown origin, and were the first inhabitants of the region. Their names constitute a fixed, small set known to everybody. Some of these mythical ancestors have genealogical links: they are indicated as father and son, brothers and (very seldom) half-brothers. There is however no consensus on the type of link between specific mythical ancestors. Some Ḥumirīs realise the essentially metaphorical nature of these links. They are the expression of present-day relationships between groups associated with the mythical ancestors. Such groups are by definition clans. At the same time (*cf.* vol I ch.) clans tend to have definite links with a specific part of the landscape (*cf.* section 7).

Actors distribute individuals and sets of close agnates over the clans in a very inconsistent way. On the other hand there exists an unmistakable (though not a completely one-to-one) relation between someone's place of residence and the clan to which he is reckoned to belong. Clan names are often tied to the landscape, serving as toponyms; thus they pass onto the people who live there, regardless of whether these people are all agnatic kinsmen.

In the lower genealogical positions we find non-mythical ancestors. They are supposed to be patrilineal descendants of the mythical ancestors, over an indefinite number of generations. For the immediate surroundings (within a radius of one to two kilometres) individual actors can mention (without consensus) the names of the non-mythical ancestors with whom their neighbours are associated, on several genealogical levels. Outside this narrow area one can only broadly identify the people who live there in terms of name clan names. Between non-mythical ancestors also close agnatic links may be stated. These statements are not consensual at all, but each informant tends to present his own statements about these links as historically correct; I have no indication that such statements concerning non-mythical ancestors are ever meant to be metaphorical. The groups associated with non-mythical ancestors might be called lineages, respectively lineage segments, were it not that the individual's genealogical knowledge turns out to be historically incomplete, often incorrect, and (most important) highly opportunist. As a result, people living in each other's social environment often have rather conceptions of how they are agnatically related, in other words, how they could situate each other in a framework consisting of patrilineal segments.

We must conclude that lineages as consensually recognised indigenous groups do not exist in Ḥumirīyya.

With regard to genealogical links between people now living, consensus (*cf.* section 3) is only found on the lowest levels: between people having a common father, father's father or at most father's father's father. These agnatic cores in Ḥumirīyya seldom comprise more than 10 heads of family.

There is little consensus about the names of non-mythical ancestors above the third ascending generation; above this generation the informants cannot mention the names of brothers of their lineal non-mythical ancestors. Agnatic links between mythical ancestors are dubious,

¹¹ Bourdieu 1963: 87f; Cuisenier 1962: 80f; Evans-Pritchard 1949: 54f; Favret 1966; Gellner 1963, *cf.* 1969; Murphy & Kasdan 1959: 18f; Patai 1965; Peters 1951, 1960.

even to the actors; and they are stated only between some of the mythical ancestors. Consensual agnatic links through non-mythical ancestors are stated only between very few agnatic cores. Finally for a considerable number of agnatic cores there is no consensus about the mythical ancestor they attach to via their apical non-mythical ancestor.

In Ḥumiriyya therefore, segmentation based on patrilineal descent does not really exist above the (low) level of the apical ancestors of agnatic cores: there is no overall segmentary structure to fit them in. Leaving aside these agnatic cores, we have now adequately falsified the hypotheses 1 and 2 (section 3), so that we can refrain from testing hypothesis 3. On higher levels than the agnatic core, unilineal descent segmentation cannot be relevant for day-to-day interaction in Ḥumiriyya.

However, for the agnatic cores we verified hypotheses 1 and 2; so now we have to investigate the relevance of these groups for day-to-day interaction. Agnatic cores are inwardly segmented. For instance in a agnatic core of living male heads of family sharing a common father's father's father we discern four levels of segmentation:

- (1) the entire agnatic core;
- (2) sets of cousins (sharing a father's father);
- (3) sets of siblings (sharing a father);
- (4) the individual heads of family.

Are these sets of people (excluding level no. 4) corporate groups, each having rights in persons and things, and collective interaction?

In Ḥumiriyya, under Berber law and at variance with the general Islamic law (*shari'a*), both men and women inherit from their parents. Usually a woman leaves the inheritance to her brother; however, in recognition of the imbalance which this creates, her children have a right to request land and other assistance from the mother's brother. Ideally brothers live together on the undivided patrimony. In practice however great conflicts arise, which lead to the heritage being divided up a number of years after the father's death. In these cases brothers tend to move their houses to a wider distance from each other, going to live nearer to other people (be these kinsmen or non-kin) with whom they are enjoying, for the moment, more positive relationships. The Ḥumiri agnatic family is thus involved in a process of continuous spatial dispersion. Therefore, with regard to land tenure, co-residence, and the interactions resulting from co-residence, the segments within the agnatic core are not, *ipso facto*, corporate groups. Brothers, cousins and even the entire agnatic core may be engaged in collective interaction in all sorts of activities: co-operation in working the land and in other economic undertakings, feasts in the family or in the honour of supernatural beings, joint action in local political conflicts, etc. But in all these situations the collective group need not be completely confined to agnates: partners may also be recruited amongst cognates, affines, neighbours (whether kinsmen or not), and non-neighbouring unrelated friends. Therefore Ego's partners in these activities frequently do not belong to his agnatic core.

Jongmans claims on the basis of many years of research in Ḥumiriyya that when political action at the village level is concerned, brothers (provided that they

live in close proximity) may form a corporate group, having a distinct political strategy and their own deputation to the men's assembly. Cousins, leave alone the entire agnatic core, lack corporateness even in politics (Jongmans, personal communications). That brothers should closely co-operate in the face of the outside world is certainly a central ideal in Ḥumiri life. However, I observed open political conflict even between brothers.

We must conclude that the agnatic core, or a segment of it, is not automatically an exclusive and solidary corporate group in Ḥumiriyya.

There are however other ways in which agnatic kinship might be of special significance for day-to-day interaction: it might constitute a special factor in the recruitment of two individuals for dyadic interaction. Now our point of view shifts from group-orientated category systems to ego-centred relationships. Each member of society (Ego) is surrounded by a number of agnates and non-agnates. What conclusions can we derive from the analysis of Ego's interaction?

I analysed quantitatively the significance of agnatic kinship for the following aspects of the social organisation: who dwells in whose proximity; who chooses whom as a partner for interactions; frequency of such interaction; mate selection in marriage. In order to assess the extent to which descent constitutes an independent factor or variable in Ḥumiri social organisation, it is necessary to control for other relevant factors or variables (notably: spatiality).

Agnatic kinship turned out to be scarcely discernible as a separate category within *the entire kindred*. Kindred is defined after Mitchell (1963), to include agnates, cognates and affines.

Agnatic kinship as such did not turn out to be an independent factor in the structuring of interaction. Extensive statistical analysis highlighted a more comprehensive factor: kinship *tout court*, which comprises agnatic, cognatic and affinal relations – all as parts of the general *kindred*, and of which agnatic kinship therefore only forms one of the constitutive elements.

The smaller the distance to Ego's house, the higher the fraction of Ego's kindred among the heads of families dwelling around Ego's house. In this respect the kindred may be taken as a undifferentiated category, except for nearest neighbours, amongst whom the proportion of close agnates is substantially higher than that of other kindred. Belonging to Ego's kindred plays a certain role in Ego's recruitment of interaction partners; in this respect however there is no difference between agnates and non-agnates within the kindred. A connection between kinship and frequency of interaction among regular interaction partners could not be established. Analysis of mate selection shows that just over 30% of all marriages are kindred-endogamous, and about a half of kindred-endogamous marriages is contracted between members of the same agnatic core. Yet these figures must not be explained by some marital preference for kindred, or particularly for agnates, but simply by reference to the fact that, among eligible (non-incestuous) possible mates in someone's social (and spatial) surroundings, the kindred (and among them: agnates cannot but constitute an important part.

We conclude that agnatic kinship is not the kind of important, independent determinant for day-to-day interaction in Ḥumiri society which both the indigenous

ideology, and interpretation of the Ḥumirī situation in terms of a classic unilineal segmentary model, proclaim. However in relatively exceptional situations involving life crises (such as circumcision, marriage, serious illness, death) the tie between Ego and his father, brother and other close agnates may be somewhat more effective than the ties with other close kindred, and with non-kindred (Jongmans, personal communications).

On the other hand the kindred as a whole is indeed an independent and major factor in Ḥumirī social organisation, relevant for the residence pattern and for the recruitment of interaction partners.

In view of these results Ḥumirī society could not possibly be described by a analytical model of segmentation based on unilineal descent.

Admittedly, in some selected contexts as indicated above, the ties between very close agnates have a certain effect on interaction; but these effects are not systematised, nor do they spread all across the entire field of social organisation, so as to result in an elaborate structure of unilineal descent segments on several levels.

Yet the actors use the formal model of the segmentary lineage as their social ideology. Therefore we may expect that this model, although not an adequate analysis of Ḥumirī social organisation, yet has some significance: indigenous statements in terms of the segmentary lineage model might be an idiom to express other, more fundamental structural principles.

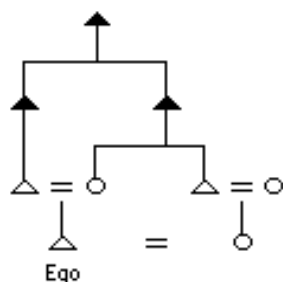


Figure 3. Use of kinship terminology in a situation of kindred endogamy.
filled symbols indicate people no longer alive

The low consensus of these statements also reveals their secondary nature. One of the conditions making for this limited consensus is connected with the fact that there is remarkably little verbal communication about the higher levels of the genealogy. Thus a (consensus promoting) social control is wanting: the existence of non-consensual, contradictory genealogical notions rarely comes to light (save by ethnographic research!). When a Ḥumirī spontaneously traces the precise genealogical link between himself and a contemporary, he tends to choose the shortest possible way: either agnatic, cognatic or affinal, and as much as possible through contemporaries. E.g. in the example of Figure 4 Ego will in nearly all situations maintain that he is married with his MBD (*bint Khala*); usually Ego will ignore the fact that she is also his agnatic second cousin, FFBSS (*bint al-wildammhu min al-baba*).

At the same time this example shows one of the most important obstacles to the emergence of consistent unilineal segmentation in Arabian societies like the society of Ḥumirīyya: their endogamous nature, which automatically transforms the lineage into a kindred after

a few generations.

Higher ancestors (mythical or non-mythical) are far less frequently used for the purpose of tracing genealogical connections between two living people; such higher-level links tend only to be invoked if no chain can be remembered, or invented, involving people of the same or adjacent generations as the speaker. If it is just a matter of stating that one shares ancestors with another persons (without indicating the exact genealogical link), then the actors show an astonishing opportunism: their genealogical claims follow the structure of day-to-day interaction within the village on that very moment.

Now let us see which more fundamental principle than unilineal descent the actors may express in indigenous terms evoking the segmentary lineage.

6. Spatial segmentation in Ḥumirīyya

I shall draw up an analytical model (type III) of spatial segmentation, covering the whole of Ḥumirī rural society and being highly relevant for day-to-day interaction. Furthermore, I shall argue that a similar model underlies the way the actors themselves conceptualise their society.

This model represents Ḥumirī rural society as being built up from hierarchically inclusive spatial segments, where a spatial segment simply to be defined as: a set of people residing in a geographically contiguous area). These spatial segments can be distinguished one from another by the following features boundaries visible in the landscape (open terrain, path, rivulet, cactus hedge, forest); a proper name (though some names be used on more than one segmentary level and in that case stop to discriminate between segments on the same, lower level); and finally there exists on each segmentary level a particular type of characteristic attribute, visible in the landscape, and distributed in such a way that segments of the same level each have their own, individual specimen of this type.

Table 1 summarises the different types of segments, their numerical size, their nomenclature and their characteristic attributes.

In Ḥumirīyya, shrines (Demerseman 1964, van Binsbergen 1971) are listed as characteristic attributes of valley and chiefdom, these segments having no other characteristic attributes. All other types of segments may have their own shrines in addition to the items cited in Table 1 as being characteristic of their particular level of segmentation. Many shrines are surrounded by cemeteries (either for adult persons or for babies and miscarriages); a cemetery can also be attached to the segments on any level as a characteristic attribute.

type of segment	size (number of families)	name derived from	characteristic attribute
household	1	(male) head of household	house (especially: the storage table inside the house)
compound	2-5	senior head of household; founder	<i>qa'a</i> (threshing-floor)
neighbourhood	5-20	ancestor of the numerically dominant agnatic core; mythical ancestor; toponym; spring; shrine	spring
village	10-50	see: neighbourhood	<i>raquba</i> (men's assembly), often annex <i>hanut</i> (village store and tea house)
valley	150-300	see: neighbourhood	shrine
chiefdom	600-1200	named by the French colonial government, after pre-existing tribal units and confederations	shrine

Table 1. Spatial segments in Humirīyya.

Finally political agents on several levels are distributed over the spatial segments. On the topmost level we have the chief. In each valley of his chiefdom he has one representative. On the village level chief and representative are in touch with the men's assembly (*djamaa*), especially with its head, who is in effect the headman of the neighbourhood or of the village to which the men's assembly in question belongs; this position may be called informal in so far as it is not recognised in the formal structure of local government as defined by the state. Each core members (*kabir*) of the assembly neatly represents a neighbourhood; almost daily they meet men of nearly all other households and yards in the men's assembly, for discussions, card playing and tea drinking.

Although the model of spatial segmentation casts a useful light on the political structure of the area, in itself it is insufficient as a basis for an exhausting analysis of present-day local politics (Jongmans 1971); for here equally important issues are personal network relations, honour, affluence, literacy, the distinction between governmental power and informal authority (the latter as built up and manifested in daily interaction on the village level), and additional accesses to governmental power (through party membership and through the relief work organisation).

The analytical model of spatial segmentation corresponds to more or less implicit, but undeniable and consensual distinctions made by the actors. We can demonstrate this in the following way. When a Humirī wants to identify some other man's social origin, he has but very incomplete terminological apparatus at his disposal. The most important indigenous terms are summarised in Table 2.

These terms overlap, each term can apply to segments on several levels, and for the actors these terms not only have a spatial aspect, but also (and on the conscious level even predominantly) an aspect of unilineal descent. Proper names of segments are subject to the same apparent vagueness. Yet the actors' descriptions of social origin have just enough precision, as Humirīs interpret them after a segmentary model analogous to the

analytical model here presented. The following general rule governs such expressions of social placement. The description always gives the highest segmentary level on which the structural position of the speaker with regard to his subject can still be expressed in term of segmentary opposition (segments above this level being in common for speaker and subject). The description is the more vague, the greater the structural distance. However, this is as it should be, because in fact structural distance is closely connected with frequency of interaction.

term	kinship aspect	spatial aspect
<i>dar</i>	a household (nuclear or extended family); a segment of an agnatic core; an agnatic core; a kindred	a household; a compound
<i>duar</i>	segment of an agnatic core; an agnatic core; a number of agnatic cores within a clan; a clan; a higher-level tribal unit	a compound; a neighbourhood; a village; a number of neighbouring villages; a chiefdom; a tribal unit extending over several chiefdoms
<i>firqa</i>	segment of an agnatic core; an agnatic core; a number of agnatic cores within a clan; a clan; a higher-level tribal unit	a compound; a neighbourhood; a village; a number of neighbouring villages; a chiefdom; a tribal unit extending over several chiefdoms

Table 2. Indigenous terms for social units in Humirīyya.

Moreover the present landscape is the result of conscious transformations made by the actors: settling, clearing, artificial systems of irrigation, paths. If spatial segments (from household up to the village) can be told from the present landscape, because of their visible boundaries, then the model of this structure must exist in the actors. A similar argument applies to the distribution of characteristic attributes over the spatial segments.

This point is the more convincing when we look at segmentation as a process. Because of demographic fluctuations and the continuous dispersion of families when sons leave their families of orientation and create their own families of procreation, a spatial segment can come to belong, as far as its function is concerned, to another segmentary level. This always goes with a redistribution of characteristic attributes. Concretely: when an adult man starts dwelling apart from his brother and brother's son, he creates for himself (and his sons) his own threshing-floor, as a beacon in the segmentary opposition on compound level. Similarly, when two neighbouring villages coalesce and fuse, then one of the two men's assemblies is given up, while of the two original village shrines one increases in importance, to the cost of the other one. The redistribution of characteristic attributes creates a new status quo, which in its turn will be the starting point for later developments.

The underlying segmentary model can also explain the actors' strongly negative stereotypes towards local groups they do not belong to (from household up to chiefdom): this is simply the emotional side of segmentary opposition.

Enough evidence has now been presented to make plausible the existence of a more or less implicit model of spatial segmentation among the Humirīs.

Spatial segmentation is highly relevant for day-to-day interaction. In the first place, spatial segments are

fully-fledged social groups, with common interaction and mutual identification among the members. By virtue of their exclusive link with some characteristic attribute they can be said to be corporate groups – even if their corporate nature may not extend to other assets than the spring, shrine, men’s assembly etc. that serve them as characteristic attributes. Collective activities of each spatial segment are closely connected with the characteristic attribute of this segment. These collective activities of segments are (from the lowest level upward): family life (productive labour in the house, eating, sleeping, raising children); working on the land; fetching water; visiting the men’s assembly. Besides on all level one has visits to shrines, feasting for shrines, and funerals. These collective activities serve the integration of the segment: on those occasion the members present themselves, emphatically as members of their spatial segment, to one another and to the outside world.

All characteristic attributes, and the collective activities associated with them, always also have religious connotations. A salutary affect is ascribed not only to visits to shrines and to burial, but also to all other activities mentioned: they are supposed to convey religious power, grace, blessing (*baraka*). The house, the threshing-floor, the spring, the men’s assembly, the shrine are not only objects visible in the landscape; they are to representations on invisible, more or less personal beings with whom man comes into contact both by his economic activities and by the ritual that exists, beyond these utilitarian practices, for each type of these characteristic attributes. Thus the internal integration of spatial segments has a religious aspect rather reminiscent of Durkheim’s theory of religion (1912).

However, from the above discussion it is clear that the spatial factor in religion is by no means the only reason to apply a model of spatial segmentation to Ḥumiriyya. Rather the reverse is true: spatiality is so conspicuous in the Ḥumiri religious domain, because that domain reflects the wider, spatiality-dominated structure of local social life in general.

Now we can return to Goody’s (1957) approach. According to him ‘local ritual congregations’ serve as a segmentary principle in West and Central Africa, Algeria, and south-east Asia. We can now extend this statement considerably. It is a primary fact that spatial groups (as in Ḥumiriyya) may function within a segmentary system. Then it is secondary whether the social processes integrating these groups are exclusively ritual (Goody), or do involve, besides, forms of interaction (and sanctions attached to them) which do not refer immediately to non-human, let alone supernatural, beings or forces.

Meanwhile we need to appreciate that only a part of a Ḥumiri’s daily activities is of a specifically collective nature, mobilising all members of a segment on a certain level. In most activities only two persons are involved. In these cases also spatiality is of great significance. I analysed statistically my data on dyadic interaction, after the following subjects: whom does Ego select as an interaction partner; with what frequency does Ego interact with his interaction partners; and the spatial aspects of mate selection.

By far the most interaction partners turned out to be chosen from among Ego’s own neighbourhood, and especially out of Ego’s own yard. Interaction with people living in other neighbourhoods and other villages is sporadic. The frequency of interaction with the chosen

interaction partner is the higher, the smaller the spatial distance between the houses of the two partners. Out of all married people about 50% was married village-endogamously. Moreover, village endogamy shows the tendency towards mate selection among nearest neighbours (whether agnates or not).

Non-collective aspects of Ḥumiri religion (e.g. individual relationship between man and local saints) are also closely connected with spatiality.

In interpreting these results we should distinguish between the effects of *spatiality* (spatial distance in general), and the effect of *spatial segmentation* which is a very specific form of spatiality. The part of the landscape occupied by a certain spatial segment may be of capricious shape. Moreover, many people of course live not at the centre but near the boundaries of the area exclusively occupied by their segment. For instance in the typical Ḥumiri village map depicted in Figure 5, the stream forms a natural boundary between two spatial segments, B1 and B2, within the encompassing segment C1. The spatial distance between the houses A3 and A1 is much smaller than that between the houses A1 and A2, yet the segmentary distance between A1 and A2 (both belonging to segment B2) is much smaller (for one segmentary level lower) than that between A1 and A3 (which only come together at the segmentary level of C1, the neighbourhood).

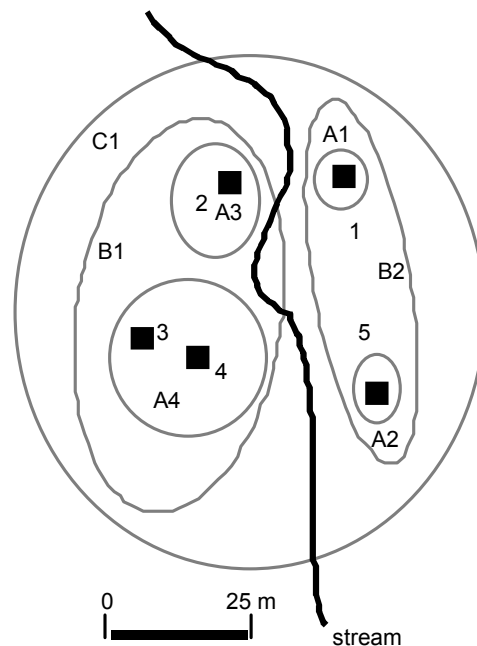


Figure 4. The discrepancy between spatial distance and segmentary distance on a typical Ḥumiri village map

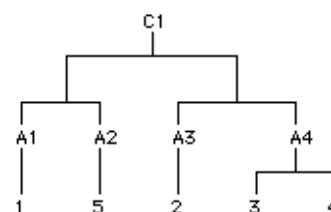


Figure 5. Diagrammatic segmentary distance as in previous Figure

Therefore, if individuals A and B belong to the same segment, and if C belongs to another segment, then the spatial distance between A and C may be yet smaller than between A and B. If the actors are guided by the model of spatial segmentation, than A would preferably interact with B; if it is more spatial distance that counts, than A would interact preferably with C. My quantitative analysis does not yield a decisive answer on this point. Usually spatial segmentation and more spatiality work in the same direction. I believe that in the infrequent borderline cases the effect of spatial segmentation is primary; besides these very cases may mark, and influence, transitory states in the process of segmentation.

Spatiality, within (and possibly also without) the model of spatial segmentation turns out to be a fundamental structural principle in Ḥumiri society.

7. Indigenous model and analytical model for Ḥumiri social organisation

How is it possible that in present-day Ḥumiriyya an indigenous model of unilineal descent segmentation is maintained as an explicit ideology, while this model in itself has no explicatory value for day-to-day interaction, and while the actors themselves do use, more implicitly, the highly relevant model of spatial segmentation? Murphy & Kasdan (1967: 10f) try to answer the following question: how is the agnatic ideology maintained in Arab societies, where (as these authors rightly - but for the wrong reasons - hold) cognate (and I would add: affinal) kinship is equally important as agnation? This problem is related to my discussion of the kindred in Ḥumiri society. In Ḥumiriyya, however, descent and the way in which it defines viable social groupings is rather secondary as compared with spatiality. Therefore we can leave this problem aside here. In the opinion of Murphy & Kasdan the problem can be solved by supposing that the actors exercise certain systematic genealogical manipulations upon their genealogical knowledge.

With Sahlins' theory of 'predatory expansion' in mind it is attractive to regard the present-day indigenous segmentation model in Ḥumiriyya as a 'cultural lag' (*cf.* Ogburn & Nimkoff 1947: 592f). According the Sahlins (1961: 342 and *passim*) the segmentary lineage is an ephemeral, self-liquidating form of organisation, advantageous only within a specific historical context (expansion into another people's territory) and doomed if brought into conflict with chiefdoms or states. The recent history of Ḥumiriyya (colonisation, pacification, sedentarisation) might correspond to this theoretical pattern. Also we have some indications (Souyris-Rolland 1949) that in the past Ḥumiriyya stated fictitious genealogical links between clans and between tribal units over a much larger spatial area than they do nowadays; this would suggest that in the past unilineal descent was more important as a segmentary principle than it is at present.

However, in striking contradiction to this idea of

cultural lag, in the course of this section I will develop the thesis that the actor's conception provides the present-day Ḥumiri with a satisfying (however distorted) description of their present situation. The indigenous conception is capable of this because of its being tautological and multi-dimensional. The present-day indigenous conception just does not fit the analytical analysis of the present situation – but that is not enough to make a cultural lag. We do not know whether in former days the Ḥumiri had the same conception of their society as they have today. Neither do we know whether this past conception corresponded better than the present one with the objective social structural of pre-colonial Ḥumiriyya (as it might have been described by some unfortunately imaginary, ethnographer). Against the Souyris-Rolland indications we could set the following arguments. Historical inquiries of Huitzing (personal communications) and of my own indicate that fighting groups in pre-colonial Ḥumiriyya were primarily spatial units, composed not merely of agnates but also of (non-agnatic) cognates and affines. In addition, pre-colonial Ḥumiriyya is likely to have resembled Cyrenaica society, for which Peters (1967) denied the segmentary lineage model to be relevant. And finally pre-colonial Ḥumiriyya would have made a poor score if we were to apply to it the factorisation of unilineal descent as proposed by Lewis (1965). Probably pre-colonial Ḥumiriyya would attain only three positive scores out of the possible ten.¹² The other societies mentioned by Lewis all make at least four scores. We may conclude that an explanation in terms of cultural lag is inadequate here.

Let us analyse the present-day indigenous model against our analytical description of the present-day social organisation.

On second thought the opening paragraph of this section is misleading. The actors do not use two models one against the other, but rather one hybrid model. Ambivalence between unilineal descent and spatiality can be found in all aspects of the actors' conception of society, and it is exactly in this way that both an agnatic ideology and a spatially segmented structure of day-to-day interaction can exist at the same time.

¹² On the items: 'descent binds men and women equally', 'non-occurrence of age-set organisation', 'non-occurrence of centralised government'; *cf.* Lewis 1965 : 106.

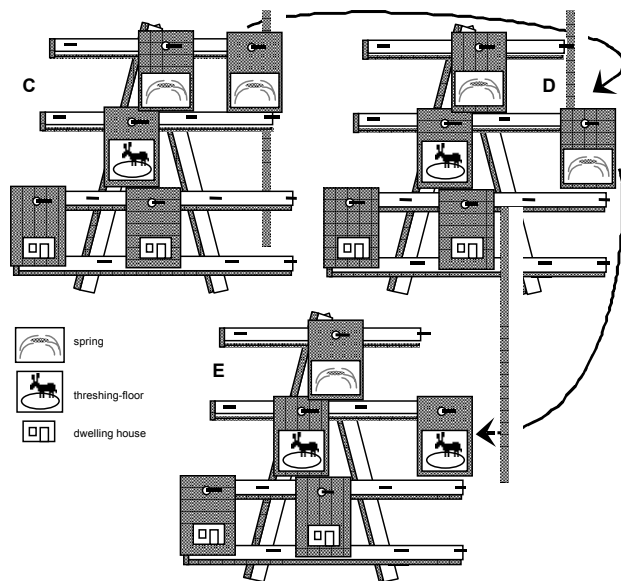


Figure 6. Redistribution of characteristic attributes in segmentary dynamics:

One segment is demoted from the super-neighborhood to the sub-neighborhood level, and in the process loses the spring as its characteristic attribute – instead its characteristic attribute at this level will be a specific threshing-floor

In spite of local ideology the actors do not derive from patrilineal descent a consensual group-orientated category system suitable to classify the whole of their society (section 5). Of course, patrilineal descent depends on ancestors who provide the links between generations. Then what is the significance of ancestors in this society? In the course of this study ancestors will re-appear in various contexts where they assume various functions and meanings. Meanwhile, in the context of the discussion of segmentation their main significance is (Table 1, third column) that the names of ancestors are added to spatial segments as additional attributes. As a rule, redistribution of characteristic attributes is followed by redistribution of ancestors within the genealogy. Speaking about their society in broad general terms, the actors can formulate the actual spatial structure as a genealogical one.

However, this pattern is never worked out entirely consistently. Often individual actors have a genealogical formulation for the structural relationship between two segments: 'Segments A and B stick together, for their ancestors were brothers'; 'segment B belongs to C, for their ancestors were father and son.' But no single actor can produce an outline, however sketchy, summarising the genealogical relationships between all spatial units on all levels, in his immediate spatial surroundings.

Because spatial segments are adequately defined by visible boundaries and by characteristic attributes, the adding of ancestor names as additional attributes is not absolutely essential for the model of spatial segmentation. In other words: groups defined by reference to (mythical or non-mythical) ancestors (including, of course, present-day groups consisting of factual brothers or of factual father and sons) are not relevant for day-to-day interaction unless these groups occupy a contiguous area having the same boundaries as the operational spatial segments, in other words coincide with such segments. E.g. clan names are sometimes

linked to areas not coinciding with presently inhabited parts of the landscape; these clan names may constitute an additional attribute of an adjacent spatial segment, but they have no direct significance for day-to-day interaction, and mainly serve as toponyms. but everyday interaction is not consciously structured by the actors in terms of clans.

However, as we shall see, in two aspects of Ḥumīrī social organisation, clans have continued to play a certain role. Old oppositions between localised clans explain the distribution of cemeteries over spatial segments. And moreover, two clan names, those of 'Arfawīyya and Zaghayḏīyya, are still used to designate two rival groupings which have dominated local politics in the chieftom of Atatfa since the end of the nineteenth century. The focus of each of these groupings is constituted by members of a few agnatic cores about whose affiliation to either clan there is general consensus. Within this focus, frequent endogamous marital relationships exists, to such an extent that it can be said that the focus is in actual fact recruited and perpetuated, not so much by affiliation to a specific lan or agnatic core, but through kindred relationships with other members of the focus. In the course of the last century many othe agnatic cores, living near either Zaghayḏīyya or 'Arfawīyya, have attempted to affiliate to either clan. The present-day set of people claiming affiliation to these clans, is absolutely not a politically solidary group; those members of the indisputable focus who are moreover politically active, constitute only a few percent of all adult men who identify themselves as members of the clan.

Yet the addition, to spatial segments, of the names of these ancestors as additional attributes makes the structure of society much more comprehensible for the actors. For in this way they can conceive this structure as the result of the expansion of families these ancestors once headed, and of the compounds these families once lived in. Male members of the family are almost completely, and male members of compounds are to a high degree, recruited through patrilineal descent. The actors project this fact onto the higher segment levels and into the past. Thus all inhabitants of the valley are made out to be agnates to one another: for an indefinite number of generation ago their forbears allegedly have belonged to the household of one mythical ancestor.

Such genealogical knowledge as individual actors possess, turns out to support this indigenous conception beautifully. For this knowledge is defective; and it is manipulated in such a way as to correspond with this conception!

Analysis of the contradictions between genealogical information of many informants showed me the several systematic operations by which historical genealogical reality is converted into manipulated genealogical knowledge. The most important operations are: omitting of persons of small historical prominence; omitting of persons who dwelled elsewhere; omitting of genealogically distant agnates, irrespective of their place of residence; omitting of spouses, siblings, and spouses of siblings, of immediate male ancestors above the third ascending generation; altering the historical genealogical position of ancestors, in accordance with the relative success or failure, rise or fall, of the segments they are associated with; presenting non-agnates as agnates, either through non-mythical ancestors or through mythical ones (fusion, caused by dwelling in each other's proximity, and by marriage ties resulting from

this condition). In these operations the spatial factor is important.

I recognised these particular systematic operations after some month's struggle with the chaos of contradictions my extensive genealogical ideal seemed to be. By permutation of these operations in view of additional historical information, I could at last try to reconstruct consistent and historically more or less convincing genealogies, and the residence history or local groups. I found that the heads of family in my research area (12 square kilometres) belonged to seventeen different lines of unilineal descent which in other words could not, justifiably, be traced to a smaller number of distinct agnatic ancestors than seventeen.

Primarily the actors overcome this remarkable diversity by spatial integration (effected both by a category system and by day-to-day interaction), and secondarily (but without consensual and detailed elaboration on this point) they present this spatial integration as a genealogical one.

Most actors are able to mention some smaller agnatic cores (not always the same) that fall outside this pattern: groups they regard as newcomers in the valley. But to them this remains a somewhat indecent exception, confirming the general rule of common patrilineal descent. Amongst scores of informants only a very few indeed appeared to see through to see this aspect of the indigenous ideology.

The ideology distorts actual residence history. An ancestor who, as an additional attribute, is associated with a certain segment, is supposed to have lived on the very place this segment is presently occupying; for are not his descendants now living on his patrimony and they do not derive from that fact their main legitimation for livings and using natural resources including fields and pastures?... Ideologically migration is non-existent, while, on the contrary, historical reconstruction shows a really vertiginous pattern of migration. Ideologically, patrilineal inheritance is the only way to obtain land. But in actual fact most migration of persons or of groups lead to residence on land that was acquired in a different way than by patrilineal inheritance: notably, by means of matrilineal inheritance, uxorial residence in marriage, gift, exchange, purchase, temporary contract, a government's concession to make a clearing, and up to the end of the nineteenth century CE: by violent conquest.

Ancestors as additional attributes of spatial segments therefore constitute one aspect of the ambivalence between patrilineal descent and spatiality in the Ḥumiriī conception of society. Another aspect appears in the most important indigenous terms for social groups (Table 2): these have invariably both a spatial and a descent aspect. And finally this ambivalence is connected with the fact that for a Ḥumiriī the following basic concepts are highly synonymous: 'kinsman' and 'positive relationship'.

Somebody is my kinsman, if he belongs to the same (*wahada*) *firqa*, *dar*, *duar* (Table 2) *cayla* (approximately: agnatic core), *famiya* (kindred), – if he and me have an ancestor in common (*djadd wahad*). I have a positive relationship with somebody, if between us there are dyadic prestations, i.e. the exchange of goods and services (or the willingness to such exchange) without payment (*bi'l maziya*), if we 'help each other' (*m'auna*); this relationship can become very close: *mutashrin* ('faithful ones'). These positive relationships come up to the indigenous ideal of the relationship

between close agnates (whatever be the true genealogical relationship between the partners): people involved in such relationships are 'like brothers' (*kif iḥwan*) or simply 'brothers' (*iḥwan*). Positive relationships (especially those between *mutashrin*) include all attributes of the ideal relationship between brothers: frequent visiting of each other's house (an impossible thing for strangers or mere acquaintances in Ḥumiriyya), eating together (culturally recognised as a ritual uniting those taking part), watching over each others honour, incapability to refuse each other's earnest requests. Besides, fictitious brotherhood lacks some of the taboos imposed on real brotherhood: talking about sex, and marrying each other's sister.

The various ways of expressing kinship with somebody are so flexible that (except in the case of very close genetically underpinned kinship) they are used in a highly opportunist way: if one has a positive relationship with the person concerned. Persons with whom one has a negative relationship are (irrespective of actual genealogical links) not presented as kinsmen, not spontaneously, and often not even during a genealogical research interview.

Moreover, presenting someone as a kinsman always has a strong agnatic suggestion. Cognates also have a *djadd* with Ego in common, for this word applies to all mythical and non-mythical ancestors, patrilineal and matrilineal, above the first ascending generation. Moreover the word *djadd* applies to local saints, with whom one has a relationship by living near his shrine or by regular visits and sacrifices; thus affines and even non-kinsmen may easily share a *djadd* with me. My *famiya* includes cognates and affines, besides agnates; however in the (most infrequent) case that one is not concerned with tracing the precise genealogical links, all 'kinsmen' are implicitly considered to be agnates. The most usual terms of address for people with whom one has positive relationships are (irrespective of genetically underpinned kinship) the kinship terms for brother, elder brother, father, father's brother, father's father and father's brother's son (depending on age and perceived social distance).

In Ḥumiriyya statements in a kinship idiom are usually meant to convey the existence (and the actors' ad hoc explanations) of actual, viable, positive relationships. The operative words most frequently used in such kinship statements: *dar*, *duar* and *firqa*, have also an important spatial aspect (cf. Table 2). Moreover positive relationships are the more likely to occur, the smaller the spatial distance between the persons concerned. In the actors' perception our categories of kinsmen, neighbours and friends to a high degree merge into one multi-dimensional aggregate. Therefore the indigenous statement 'A is a kinsmen of B' (expressed in one of the above cited ways), can be translated as: 'A and B have a positive relationship, for they live in each other's proximity, they belong to the same spatial segment'. From this point of view the indigenous statement contains something very similar to the conclusions of our scientific analysis (section 6).

However, the significance of kinship in Ḥumiriyya is not completely limited to secondary statements (in a kinship idiom) of spatiality and of positive relationships. We noted that the kindred is an independent structural determinant for the residential pattern and for day-to-day interaction. Contrary to the indigenous ideology, agnates do not stand out as a very distinct category within the kindred. But agnatic kinship is important exactly as an

indigenous model and an indigenous ideal. It is this ideal that provides the actors with a conveniently simple, however distorted, insight into the structure of their society, and with an ideal to test the contents of their actual relationships against. Though not statistically significant as such (unless as an ideological idiom in which to express the social significance of the kindred in general), yet the indigenous agnatic ideology constitutes one of the pillars of Ḥumirīyya society.

Enough has now been said about the indigenous segmentation model. Ḥumirī concepts are (like all folk concepts presumably) multi-dimensional, and overlap. None of these concepts is the exact equivalent of our analytical concepts. Therefore the Ḥumirīs do not possess any testable, analytical model for the description of their society. The contradiction between indigenous and analytical model is a sham problem: one attempts to compare incomparable entities. The same objection applies when, in classic segmentation theory, the indigenous model is held to be identical to the analytical model. On the other hand: actors have to maintain themselves in their society, and (be they ever no social scientists) their notions should have some correspondence at least to objective social reality. I showed that in fact this correspondence can be found if we explore the semantic implications of the indigenous model.

This argument has some relevance to the recent school of cognitive anthropology (ethnoscience, componential analysis; Tyler (1969) presents an excellent collection of related papers). These scholars claim incisive (though isolated) semantic analysis of indigenous concepts to be the key to a 'new ethnography'. They take the view, implicitly, that indigenous concepts *are* what analytical concepts *should be*, notably: well demarcated, defined in a logically impeccable way, so as to be mutually exclusive. I quite agree that semantics are fundamental to the study of society and culture; but this is so in virtue of the indigenous concepts being multi-dimensional, overlapping and contradictory. A truly new ethnography should explore the laws governing these basic phenomena, e.g. within the frame of a general theory of human symbols.

8. The significance of spatiality

Why is spatiality so important in Ḥumirī society?

The answer is easy, once we assume that human behaviour is often rational: pursuing maximal profit with minimal costs.

This is the well-known 'principle of least effort of Zipf (1949), demonstrated many times by all sorts of empirical data (linguistic, sociological, biological) and given a theoretical foundation, within statistical information theory, by Mandelbrot (*cf.* Cherry 1957: 100f, 209f).

With regard to spatial distance we may put forward the following thesis: 'usually people do not fetch something from far away if exactly the same thing can be obtained closer by – else for the same profit the costs would be higher'.

Let us imagine a localised set of people. We suppose that potentially these people can offer about the same opportunities to one another, as to the important things in life: economic, political and religious co-operation, spouses, material goods, entertainment, etc.

The differences which are still occurring follow a normal distribution. In this imaginary, homogeneous society everyone would mainly interact with his nearest neighbours. Interaction with people living at wider distances would be sporadic, and could be explained from change fluctuations in supply.

My quantitative data (*cf.* sections 5 and 6) fit this model well. Zipf sought to substantiate his theory by reference certain to characteristic exponential curves, relating costs and frequency; now my own experimental curves are similar to Zipf's. In order to explain this surprising result we must return to section 4.

Present-day Ḥumirīyya does not exactly correspond with our imaginary society! Like in our model, the Ḥumirīs are still propounding an ideology of fundamental quality of all members of their society. But in fact there are very marked differences in power and in material affluence. The excessively rich and powerful constitute – by definition – only 5-10% of the heads of family in the villages. Members of this top layer preferably interact with one another (even when there is a considerable distance between their houses) and they contract marriages over remarkably large distances. They have regular patron/ client relationships with a small part of the rest of the population. Part of these clients dwell next-door to the patron, the others live dispersed over the villages. Interaction between members of the top layer, and between them and their dispersed clients, as far as spatiality is concerned deviates from the interaction within the rest of the population. None the less the effect of this deviation upon my measuring is small, the top layer, and its dispersed clientele, comprising only a small proportion of the entire population.

The measuring results for the rest of the population can easily be understood. The normal economic activities are carried out by all families: small-scale horticulture and husbandry, preparation of food, fetching water, etc. Co-operation on these points is the less costly for the people concerned if they choose nearest neighbour for their partners. Visits and entertainment are obviously connected with this. The same patterns is found when it comes to mate selection. Incest prohibitions exclude only a small set of nearest kindred as possible mates (*cf.* note 8); while observing these prohibitions, one chooses a mate out of those families with which one is already heaving positive relationships: neighbours, principally.

Specialist activities fall (by definition) outside this pattern. A specialist operates in a greater spatial area than is usual for daily interaction. But apart from their specialist services, the families of specialists function just as any other family.

Of course there is only a relative difference, as to spatiality, between the rich and powerful, their clients, and specialists on the one hand, and the rest of the population on the other. The active range of the former is much greater: the rich and powerful, and the specialists, have more to offer, to each other and to other people, than is usual in Ḥumirīyya. This higher yield justifies higher costs – greater distances among other things. So desirable are relationships with the rich and powerful, that a poor man who can be a client is prepared to bear additional costs: greater distances than he would tolerate in his interaction with the other, poor, people.

Important aspects of Ḥumirī society can be brought together from the print of view of spatiality.

But let us not exaggerate.

In section 1 I emphasised that a group-orientated category system (e.g. spatial segmentation) can provide only a partial description of a social system. Even if we take spatiality to be an important principle both in spatial segmentation and in ego-centred relationships, the concept has yet great limitations. In order to demonstrate this, let us consider the distribution of households over the landscape, at a certain moment.

The differences in the interaction between these households can be explained, to a large extent, by spatiality, – but not completely so. We noted that belonging to one another's kindred, relative affluence (cf. Jongmans 1968), differences in political power, and specialism constitute independent determinants, apart from spatiality.

Spatiality is of great importance in present-day Ĥumiriyya, where still most people have about as much or as little of offer to one another. But it may be expected that this significance will rapidly decrease in favour of non-spatial factors, especially differences in power and in affluence. This process can already be observed; however I will not now discuss its details.

In the same vein, spatiality cannot explain the pattern of households removals. Land scarcity did put an end to collective migrations, but individual families still display great spatial mobility. In 1970 the largest village in my research area had over 40 households; of these over 30% had moved at least once since 1966 (cf. Beeker 1967). Usually within the same village (without counting newly emerged families). Relative affluence turned out to be the most important determinant in those removals. In nearly all removals the head of the household, by removing, altered the set of his nearest neighbours in such a way that this set was to contain fewer people who were poorer than himself (especially escaping from the poorest ones), and more people who were richer than himself (especially seeking the richest ones). Removals that did not correspond with this rule turned out to be unstable: after a short time a second removal followed. Additional factors are: the dispersion of the Ĥumiri family (but removals connected with this factor largely answered the general rule); and the political ambitions of some of the rich (allowing poor people to settle next or and to benefit somewhat, as neighbours, from their affluence: while the politically unambitious rich people removed to the periphery of the village, escaping from poor neighbours).

This process may seem to counteract spatiality as a major determinant factor in Ĥumiri social organisation, yet it develops against a background of spatiality. For the rationale of removing is the assumption that neighbours interact intensively, have some access to each other's affluence, and therefore that the set of neighbours should continuously be improved. Removal does not affect the spatial model; it only affects the position of a certain household within the structure. After the removal the household has to take up its role in the newly entered spatial segment, and (except for the centrifugal rich who would seek to minimise the costly day-to-day interaction with much poorer neighbours) it never fails to do so.

Spatiality is a static principle, and cannot account for the dynamics of a social system. If spatiality were all-explaining, it would be the end of social science: everything would be reduced to geography. On the other hand: the great significance of spatiality in some societies is not as trivial as it might appear. Thus, with

regard to spatiality there is a striking difference between Ĥumiriyya (where spatiality unite people into real social groups: segments) and the urban North Atlantic society, where spatiality is of some importance for ego-centred relationships, but where spatial social groups are much less marked.

The emphasis I put upon spatiality is mainly a relative one: as an alternative to unilineal descent. This point I shall now work out for a conclusion.

9. Conclusion: Spatiality and unilineal descent as competing structural principles in segmentation

Spatiality does not imply spatial segmentation. Spatiality is a continuous phenomenon: spatial distance can be measured continuously, e.g. by means of a ruler. Essential for the segmentary model, on the other hand, is that it represents this continuous phenomenon in a discrete, discontinuous, digital way: on each of the levels in the model the distinction between the segments is discontinuous, absolute, and involves not a gradual transition but a firm boundary. This boundary is conceptual (as manifest in the nomenclature of social groups); social (as manifest in the patterns of interaction which converge within each segment at the relative exclusion of people belonging to other segments); and spatial (since the segment tends to be projected onto the landscape, where it is associated with one particular land area that carries the name of that segment and / or its apical ancestor.

One of the possible ways in which this digitalisation can be worked out within a society, is the Ĥumiri model of spatial segmentation. In other societies having spatial segmentation this cultural form may be different.

But which are these societies?

Evans-Pritchard described one of them in *The Nuer*. In subsequent years classic segmentation theory stressed unilineal descent so as never to work out the possibility of spatial segmentation; always spatiality has been presented in dependence from unilineal descent.

My thesis is that many societies to which the segmentary lineage model has been applied, might at least equally successfully be described in terms of spatial segmentation.

Here I cannot test this statement cross-culturally. I will confine myself to indicate that even this classic paradigm, the Tallensi, fits and interpretation in terms of spatial segmentation.¹³ From Fortes' description we learn that among the Tallensi spatiality and lineage are congruent principles, and that the lineage (in spite of non-resident members) is only effective by its being linked to a territory and by spatial proximity of its members. What then justifies Fortes' one-sided stress of the lineage principle?

'Tale society is built up around the lineage system. It is no exaggeration to say that every sociological problem presented by the Tallensi hinges on the lineage system. It is the skeleton of their social structure, the bony framework which shapes their body politic; it guides their economic life and their ritual ideas and values' (Fortes

¹³ Cf. Fortes 1945: 62, 92, 171, 207, 209, 211.

1945: 30).

Would we not be allowed to replace 'lineage system' by 'spatial organisation', in this quotation?

In his detailed re-analysis of Fortes' descriptions, Worsley (1956) goes even further. He shows that Fortes' own published data do not necessarily lead to his influential generalisations about an irreducible and fundamental lineage system. Worsley reveals the truly fundamental economic relations (in which spatiality is important) underlying the lineage system.¹⁴

But apart from scattered ethnographic evidence, there are several systematic, theoretical reasons for reinterpreting, *in terms of spatiality*, many societies hitherto described as having segmentary lineages.

- Spatiality as an alternative to unilineal descent. We may safely assume that spatiality is of great importance in any system of social organisation, be it segmentary or not (sections 2.1 and 2.8).
- Bilaterality as an alternative to unilineal descent. More and more societies are now claimed to be bilaterally organised, though according to indigenous ideology, and/or earlier publications by other (or even the same) authors, these societies were claimed to be dominated by unilineal descent (section 2). Spatial segmentation might be an alternative for those societies where, because of bilateral organisation, unilineal descent segmentation is obviously ruled out as a viable analytical model of social organisation.
- Descent-derived segments turn out to be spatial social units. In a great number of segmentary societies the segments more or less defined by unilineal descent, are closely linked to a clearly defined part of the landscape.
- The puzzling source of a segment's internal solidarity. Barth (1959) raised the question about the nature of the solidarity unifying a certain segment within a segmentary system:
- 'Most analyses of lineage system (...) depend, although this is not always stated, on a Durkheimian concept of mechanical solidarity' (1959: 19; cf. Durkheim 1893: 35f, 149f).
- In order to explain Pathan organisation, Barth proposes a different point of view: lineage solidarity being the integrated result of individual political choices of the actors, striving for their own profit. Thus fundamental structural phenomena can be explained by reference to individual interactions and motivations, instead of a, somewhat mystic, moral lineage principle. The concept of spatial segmentation has a similar advantage as Barth's approach; for the importance of spatiality is connected with the same rational principles in individual interactions and motivations: pursuing maximal profit with minimal costs (section 8).
- *Segmentation and consensus*. The final reason is connected with the consensus problem, so stressed in my analysis of Ḥumiri society. Spatial distinctions are based on data which are, both to the actors and to the researcher, directly visible in the outside world. The spatial distribution of people is an unmistakable phenomenon, no matter whether the reference is to a peasant village, a nomadic habitat, a medium-sized town or a working room in a modern bureaucratic system. Spatial definition of segments may warrant a high degree of consensus. By contrast, the structural principle of unilineal descent is worked out by means of ancestors. In general ancestors cease to have any direct empirical referents up from the second or third generation. Ancestors die, and their contemporaries die along with them. Distinctions through ancestors can

only be relevant because of the ideas individual actors have about these ancestors: their names, epoch, place of residence, deeds, place of interment, genealogical position. Nothing is less constant than ideas about the past. Some degree of consensus can only be arrived at by a high degree of verbal communication on ancestors, and by written reports; the latter however are virtually non-existent outside the Tunisian National Archives, from which they do not penetrate to the Ḥumiri mountains (at least not in the late 1960s). This condition for consensus therefore is not fulfilled in Ḥumiriyya (nor is it, probably, in many other societies). Therefore within such a society the notions of individual actors about kin groups tend to diverge more and more one from another. Descriptions in the line of classic segmentation theory do not pay attention to this consensus problem. The genealogies printed in the monographs are taken both as historically correct (except in the topmost generations) and as endorsed by all actors. On this point my own Ḥumiri experience made me so suspicious that I am inclined to consider all description of segmentary lineage systems as artefacts, as long as the researchers do not explicitly demonstrate genealogical consensus. In this respect the Tiv (Northern Nigeria) constitute a remarkable case. Tiv genealogical performance has been analysed thoroughly (Bohannan 1952) and resembles the Ḥumiri one, with regard to for inconsistency, lack of consensus, and manipulation. (However, Tiv genealogies are frequently discussed and are sometimes adapted to actual structural relationships in public meetings; these features, lacking in the Ḥumiri case, may increase consensus). Like Ḥumiri settlements, Tiv ones display a considerable agnatic diversity (Bohannan 1952: 301 n. 3). None the less the agnatic principle in Tiv society was not readily understood as a secondary expression of other underlying factors, including spatial organisation. The Tiv still stand out as a paradigm of unilineal descent segmentation.

• Much less than spatiality, unilineal descent can yield the unambiguous non-opportunist distinctions that are essential for any segmentary system. Thus spatiality as a segmentary principle is not only more attractive in an analytical model, but also more practically useful for (and so, perhaps, more frequently used by?) the actors in their indigenous model.

Possibly the selection of one particular structural principle (either spatiality or unilineal descent) in segmentary societies is connected with the marriage system. Ḥumiriyya has a remarkably open marriage system: mate selection is only structured by the incest taboo, and this applies only the nearest kin: Ego's parent's parent; parent's sibling; parent; sibling; child; sibling's child; child's child. In societies with a much more extended incest taboo, or with marriage prescriptions, unilineal descent as a segmentary structural principle might be much more important than in Ḥumiriyya. Cross-cultural comparison can cast further light on this point.¹⁵

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¹⁴ Cf. Fortes' unconvincing reply (1969: 220f).

¹⁵ I owe this suggestion to André Köbben.

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