

KLĀRA VĀVRA (Tartu)

## PRINCIPLES OF CLASSIFYING THE NAMES OF RELATIONSHIP IN MANSI

In any language the system of relationship is of a classifying character. It is difficult to imagine a language with a special name for each separate biological group of relatives. It is merely a matter of difference in the principles according to which various categories of relationship are reduced to a common term.

There is a difference of principle between K. F. Karjalainen<sup>1</sup> and W. Steinitz<sup>2</sup> as regards their approach to the study of the system of relationship in Khanti (which, on the whole, is very similar to that in Mansi). The former considers the biological principle to be the only one underlying the formation of the names of relationship, whereas the latter sees in those names, in the first place, definite social relations.

Being a study of the system of relationship in Mansi, the present paper seeks to establish the principles of classifying the names of relationship in Mansi, explaining them by the social relations of the patriarchal tribal organization, underlying the system of relationship in Mansi.

Interdictions of marriage: fraternal and, later on, tribal exogamy, strictly observed till recently and maintained up to the present time, may be considered determining features in the tribal organization of the Mansi people.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, the first opposition in the system of relationship in Mansi is formed according to whether a person belongs to the *ego* tribe or not. It is only purely agnatic relatives, i. e. the group within which relatives are traceable exclusively in the male line: the father of one's father, the brother of one's father's father, the son of one's father's brother, etc., who may actually be considered members of a patriarchal tribe. For instance, it is natural that, for *ego*, his (her) brother's sister and his (her) brother's daughter or the daughter of his (her) father's brother are also members of his (her) own tribe. Upon marrying, however, a female person finds herself in another tribe. Families related to *ego* in the female line are also considered more distant than those related through male persons. That, for example, accounts for the fact that *ego* makes a clear distinction between his (her) cousins — the children of his (her) father's brother and the children of his (her) father's sister, mother's brother, mother's sister. However, the children of

<sup>1</sup> K. F. Karjalainen, *Wie Ego im Ostjakischen die Verwandten benennt*. — FUF XIII 1913, pp. 207—295.

<sup>2</sup> W. Steinitz, *A finnugor rokonsági elnevezések rendszere*. — *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Nyelv- és Irodalomtudományi Osztályának Közleményei*, X. k., 3—4. sz. 1957, pp. 321—334.

<sup>3</sup> *Народы Сибири*. — *Этнографические очерки*, Москва 1956, p. 590.



his (her) father's brothers are named in the same way as his (her) own brothers and sisters. The opposition between 'a member of the *ego* tribe — not a member of the *ego* tribe' is much more important than the more common opposition in the "European" systems between 'a blood relative — a relative by marriage'.

Relatives in the direct line are named according to the same principles as can be found in the systems familiar to us: notions such as 'father', 'mother', 'son', 'daughter', etc., i. e. the members of a nuclear family, are clearly distinguished from other relatives terminologically.

However, entirely different principles underly the formation of other names. Analysing the meaning of the word *aki*, one can see that all the relatives belonging to one's father's tribe and older than one's father are covered by that name. According to their mutual relation *aki* and *ākw* can be brother and sister (one's father's elder brother — one's father's elder sister) or husband and wife (one's father's elder brother — his wife; one's father's elder sister — her husband).

On the basis of the names *aki* and *ākw* several compound terms have been formed, used by female persons to denote their relatives by marriage. It has been mentioned already that, on marrying, a woman finds herself in another tribe, the members of which become her closest relatives besides those belonging to her father's tribe. The correlation between those names should by no means be considered accidental, especially as they belong semantically to more or less the same groups of relatives.

*akimājkə* may have the meaning of (1) the father of one's husband; (2) the elder brother of one's husband's father; (3) the elder brother of one's husband's mother; (4) one's husband's grandfather; (5) the husband of an elder sister of one's husband's father; (6) the husband of an elder sister of one's husband's mother; (7) one's husband's elder brother; i. e. relatives belonging to one's husband's tribe, older than himself. The corresponding name denoting female persons is a compound word *ākwekwə*, meaning the female relatives of one's husband's tribe, older than the husband. As in the names *aki* and *ākw*, here, too, blood relationship and that by marriage are confused. As to their form, besides the terms of relationship *aki* and *ākw*, those words also comprise the components *ājkə*, meaning 'an old man' and *əkwə*, meaning 'an old woman'. Word-composition of that kind is highly characteristic of names denoting relationship in Mansi (as well as in other Ugric languages); they express a higher degree of respect than do the simple terms; in the present case such a formula of emphasized respect has also a meaning of lesser cordiality and ingenuousness, a more official attitude towards the relatives of one's husband as compared with one's own relatives.

Returning to the agnatic group, one can see that the children of *aki* are placed on the same footing as the children of *jaγ*, and *ego* calls his (her) cousins — the children of his (her) father's brothers the same as his (her) own brothers and sisters: *kaŋk*, *āpsi*, *uwsɪ* and *ēs*. Besides, there is no difference in terms between the names of the children of elder and younger brothers of one's father; as in the names of one's own brothers and sisters, seniority is distinguished relatively to *ego*.

*kaŋk* is an agnatic relative, older than *ego* but younger than the father of *ego*, i. e. he may be a younger brother of one's father, an elder brother of *ego* or an elder cousin (a son of the father's brother) of *ego*. In those rare cases, however, when a nephew (a brother's son) happens to be older than *ego*, the latter calls him *kaŋk*, too.



*uwśi* denotes another group parallel to *kaŋk*. It is the name given to all of one's agnatic female relatives of the 0 generation if they are older than *ego*; the name may also denote one's father's younger sister or one's elder brother's daughter if she is older than *ego*.

*āpsī* is the name given to one's agnatic relatives of the 0 generation, younger than *ego*. It may also denote one's agnatic relatives of the -1 generation (the sons of one's elder brothers), younger than *ego*.

*ēs* has the meaning of 'one's younger sister', 'one's younger female cousin (the daughter of one's father's brother)'; 'a niece' (one's brother's daughter), i. e. collateral relatives of one's father's tribe belonging to the 0 and the -1 generation, younger than *ego*.

The children of *āpsī* are named *apīy*. But this is a rather vague term, comprising one's blood relatives of the younger generations — one's grandchildren, nephews and nieces, regardless of their sex.

The names *pānt* and *ēŋk* denote the sons and the daughters of a sister of the father of *ego* as well as the children of the sisters of *ego*, i. e. the children of the women of one's father's tribe, not belonging to that tribe any longer. In the class of one's husband the name *pānt* may denote one's husband's younger brothers as well as his nephews, i. e. a group which might be reduced to the formula: 'the relatives of one's husband, younger than himself'. It should be mentioned, however, that the sons of one's husband, being at the same time the sons of *ego*, fall under the same definition. But they are distinguished terminologically by the word *piy*, denoting descending relatives of the -1 generation and in the direct line. Accordingly, in order to give a more precise definition, one can say that *pānt* has the meaning of 'the male relatives of one's husband in a collateral line, younger than himself'. The parallel term *ēŋk* means 'the female relatives of one's husband in a collateral line, younger than himself'. The daughters of one's husband (and of *ego*) are distinguished from them by means of the term *āyi*. The names *pānt* and *ēŋk* may also denote a step-son or a step-daughter (from a female person's point of view). The correlation of all those meanings becomes clear from highly important features in the family relations of the Mansi people such as the levirate and the sororate. According to the levirate a man may marry (a) the widow of his elder brother; (b) his wife's sister. According to the sororate a woman may marry (a) a younger brother of her dead husband; (b) her sister's husband. It was not prohibited among the Mansis to have several wives, and if polygamy was actually rare, it was merely because of poverty, which did not enable a man to support more than one wife. At any rate, it was not impossible for a woman to marry her husband's younger brother who already had a wife and children by the latter.

On this basis a female person could consider the children of her sister potential step-sons and step-daughters. And if a woman marries her dead husband's younger brother who happens to have children from his first marriage already, they constitute *pānt* and *ēŋk* groups for her, as the nephews and nieces of her first husband. It is thus that she calls her step-sons and step-daughters.

Passing on to the names denoting the wives of one's agnatic relatives, one should bear in mind that there exists a clear-cut differentiation as to the wives of one's elder relatives (1) according to their generation; (2) according to their degree of relationship, whereas all the wives of one's younger relatives are reduced to one single term *mañ*. Ethnographers have helped to explain this fact. There is a custom among the Ob



Ugrians for a married woman to cover herself up before the elder male persons of her husband's tribe, to look aside when speaking to them, to address them indirectly in the third person: 'he is coming', 'he said', etc. It has already been mentioned above that a woman calls all her husband's elder relatives *akimâjka*; so it becomes clear that there is no need for her to differentiate them. There exists also a corresponding restriction for men: the wives of all the younger male persons of his tribe constitute a taboo for a man; he need not, therefore, distinguish between them, the fact having also been reflected in terminology.

However, a man's relations to his elder brothers' wives (to the wives of the *kaŋk* group) are of an entirely friendly and intimate character. That group is named by the term *ãñiy*. In order to comprehend the term, one should again proceed from the levirate: if *ego* happens to have an elder brother, he may encroach upon the latter's wife, i. e. upon his *ãñiy*. For *ego*, *ãñiy* is a potential wife. If *ego* is a child, his father's *ãñiy* is his potential step-mother. After the true mother's death or even in her life-time she may become a second wife of the father of *ego*, and, accordingly, also his step-mother. This is why, besides other meanings, *ãñiy* may also denote one's step-mother.

In his analysis of the Khanti term *ãñzi*, which corresponds to *ãñiy* in Mansi, both in its origin and meaning, W. Steinitz has overlooked the meaning 'one's mother's sister' of the Khanti term. Such a translation of the word is given, however, in various sources of the Mansi language. It can be explained by the custom of the sororate, according to which a man may marry the sister of his wife after the latter's death or even in her life-time. In other words, considering the problem once again from the point of view of *ego* being a child, a sister of its mother may become its step-mother after the death of its mother or even during her life-time. That explains the fact that the term *ãñiy* is used by *ego* to denote the sisters of its mother as well as its step-mother.

Thus *ãñiy* may be regarded as a term expressing a certain potential relationship. For a man a potential wife may be the wife of an elder brother or a younger sister of his wife; for a child a potential step-mother may be the wife of an elder brother of its father as well as a younger sister of its mother. This is the group bearing the name *ãñiy*.

There is a term *sasiγ* in the tribe of one's mother. This term denotes male persons of her tribe and means 'a brother of one's mother, either elder or younger', 'a cousin — the son of a brother of one's mother'. It is only the father of one's mother who is singled out by a special term *ãšâjka*. Such a weak differentiation can be explained by the fact that, for *ego*, the tribe of his mother is a strange one, and its members do not play any important part in his life. Consequently, there is no need for a special differentiation in their names.

*nij* (alongside with *ãñiy*) denotes one's mother's younger sister, but it may also denote one's cousin — the daughter of one's mother's brother. Some sources give the words *ãkw*,<sup>4</sup> *ãkwekwã*<sup>5</sup> for the notion 'one's mother's elder sister', which is, evidently, a more recent violation of the system, dating back to the time when clear-cut differentiations were disappearing and, terminologically, 'one's father's elder sister' was combined with 'one's mother's elder sister'.

Male and female cousins — the children of one's mother's sisters,

<sup>4</sup> E. Ромбандеева, Русско-мансийский словарь, Ленинград 1954, p. 314.

<sup>5</sup> В. Чернецов и И. Чернецова, Краткий мансийско-русский словарь, Москва—Ленинград 1936, p. 61.



are named by the words *āḥkwāpīy* and *āḥkwāpī*. The fact that the determining element in those terms is not a word meaning 'one's mother's sister', but one denoting one's mother herself may suggest that these names were formed in ancient times when family relations had not yet been established and the whole group of female persons of one's mother's tribe (sometimes his sisters only, but possibly other relatives) was reduced to a single term without being distinguished from one's own mother. According to their construction those terms fully correspond to the names *jaḥpīy*, and *jaḥpī*, used to denote one's own brothers and sisters. The meanings 'the son of one's father's brother', 'the daughter of one's father's brother' are also attached to these words in a number of sources.<sup>6</sup> Proceeding from this, one may suppose that the term *jaḥ* has an equally undifferentiated meaning, denoting male persons of one's father's tribe (including one's father).

There is no term in any Mansi source for one's step-brother or step-sister. However, it is clear from the levirate and from the sororate that certain groups of male and female cousins of *ego* may become such. If one's mother marries a younger brother of one's father, the corresponding male and female cousins in one's father's line become one's step-brothers and step-sisters: *jaḥpīy* — *kaḥk*, *āp̄si*; *jaḥpī* — *uw̄si*, *ēs*; the same thing happens if one's father marries the widow of his elder brother. If one's mother marries the husband of her sister or if one's father marries a sister of his wife (a sister of the mother of *ego*), the step-brothers and -sisters of *ego* are named *āḥkwāpīy* and *āḥkwāpī*. Accordingly, *ego* distinguishes between his (her) step-brothers and -sisters in his (her) father's line and his (her) step-brothers and -sisters in his (her) mother's line.

The wives of the *sasīy* group, or, strictly speaking, the wives of one's mother's brothers, are reduced to a single term *ūp*. *Ego* names the husband of his (her) mother's sisters *jaḥlāḥ*; the word may also denote one's step-father. The latter meaning is, so to speak, more important, predominating for the given term, being also fixed in its structure: *jaḥ-lāḥ*, meaning 'a kind of father' (*-lāḥ* is a suffix used exclusively in terms of relationship, precisely pointing out meanings such as 'a step-father', 'a step-son', 'a step-daughter'). It is due to the function of a potential step-father that the group 'the husband of one's mother's sister' is important for *ego*.

In the tribe of one's wife the differentiation is also rather weak, which fact becomes clear if we take into account that the tribe of one's wife also falls under the definition 'a strange tribe'. *Ego* names all the relatives of his wife *up*, reducing his wife's father and brother to one term; the wives of the *up* group — the mother of one's wife and the wives of the mother's brothers are named *āḥīp*.

Being already acquainted with the system of the names of relationship in Mansi, one might suppose that the word *āḥīp* is also used to name the sisters of one's wife, and that the word *up* denotes their husbands. At any rate, a similar construction has been found in the class of one's father. But such is not the case: there is a special name *kil* for the sisters of one's wife, singling out the group from the others, and, according to the sororate, the distinction is a compulsory one, the sisters of one's wife being potential wives for *ego*.

In the groups 'the sister of one's wife' and 'the husband of one's wife's sister' we can see a phenomenon, not characteristic of the Mansi

<sup>6</sup> В. Чернецов и И. Чернецова, *op. cit.*, p. 70.



language (nor of any other Ugric language) where no distinction is made according to a relative's sex: *kil* may denote both a sister of one's wife and the latter's husband. The fact seemed so uncommon to K. F. Karjalainen that he considered the meanings 'a sister of one's wife' and 'the husband of one's wife's sister' to be the result of a coincidence of two homonyms, believing them to have originated from different words.<sup>7</sup> But it is hardly likely that two words of different origin should have arisen on the basis of full coincidence in sound and correspondence in meaning; the etymology given by K. F. Karjalainen is not convincing. An explanation for the coincidence is most likely to be found in the fact that there is but a weak differentiation in Mansi for less important relationship. For instance, we have already seen that no differentiation is sought in the term *ap̄iγ*, as it denotes one's younger relatives regardless of their sex, generation and degree of relationship. For *ego*, the husband of his wife's sister is an unimportant relative; as a rule, they belong to different tribes. The main thing is that it is only when a sister of one's wife is unmarried that she plays an important part in the life of *ego*, being able to become the wife of *ego* only if she is free; but if a sister of one's wife is a married woman, the potential relation is lost and the relationship loses its importance altogether. That is why the husband of one's wife's sister is not of great significance by himself; and, what is even more important, his existence lessens the meaning of the given relationship, and it is only through the death of her husband that a sister of one's wife becomes a potential (and often also an actual) wife for *ego*, their relationship becoming important. That explains the fact why the group 'the husband of one's wife's sister' is likely to be perceived as some appendage to the group 'a sister of one's wife' and is combined with the latter from the terminological point of view.

The daughters of the *kil* group are named *ewl̄aη* 'step-daughters' (from a male person's point of view), which serves as another proof of the great importance of the levirate and the sororate in the structure of the terms of relationship in Mansi. It is true that we have not been able to find any parallel term, something akin to *piγl̄aη*, in any more or less modern sources. A. Ahlqvist gives terms of the Southern dialect such as *p̄ütet*, *p̄ütet* 'Stiefsohn' ('a step-son')<sup>8</sup> and *ätet* 'Stieftochter' ('a step-daughter').<sup>9</sup>

The logic and the consistent nature of the system of classifying the names of relationship in Mansi is really striking. It is true that the original clear-cut distinctions are being gradually lost; we could see this, for example, in the meaning of 'an elder sister of one's mother'; in several dialects also the distinction between the notions 'the father of one's husband' — 'the father of one's wife', 'the mother of one's husband' — 'the mother of one's wife' is disappearing.

Thus we may conclude that the terms of relationship in Mansi are classified according to the following principles: (1) according to the sex of the relative; (2) the direct line — the collateral line; (3) a member of one's tribe — not a member of one's tribe; in order to give the problem a more concrete expression, it is also important to note to what tribe a relative belongs: to that of one's father, mother, husband or wife, or what the sex of a linking relative is, i. e. when speaking of the tribe of one's father, for instance, one should note whether the children of

<sup>7</sup> K. F. Karjalainen, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ahlqvist, *Wogulisches Wörterverzeichnis*, Helsinki 1891, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.



his brothers or those of his sisters are meant; (4) according to the generation (although the correlation of seniority between a person and his relatives in the direct line is more important, an elder brother of *ego* being reduced to the same group with a younger brother of his father but distinguished from his own younger brother); (5) according to seniority within one and the same generation. In the 0 generation seniority is usually correlated with *ego*, being correlated in the older generation with a linking relative in the direct line (e. g. an elder brother of one's father — a younger brother of one's father).

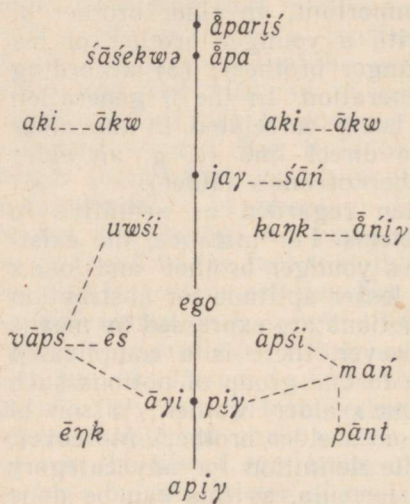
Such systems of relationship are often regarded as primitive in comparison with so-called "European" systems. For instance, the existence of separate terms for the notion 'one's younger brother' and 'one's elder brother' is sometimes attributed to a lesser aptitude for abstraction compared with the languages where such notions are expressed by means of a single word (*брат* in Russian). However, there is a complicated abstraction in the terminological reduction to one group of notions such as 'a younger brother of one's father', 'one's elder brother', 'a son of the brother of one's father' and 'a son of one's elder brother'. Moreover, if necessary, a Mansi can give an accurate definition for any category of relationship by means of a descriptive formula, as this can be done in European languages. The fact is that it is only on rare occasions that he needs such a precise definition for a biological category of relationship; it is the part played by the relative in the life of one's family and defined by a corresponding name of relationship that is of greater significance.

Therefore, in order to comprehend the system of relationship in Mansi, one should not approach the question, applying categories based on the biological notion of relationship; instead, one should tackle the problem from the point of view of the social structure of family relations. On the whole, the modern system of relationship in Mansi reflects the life of a large patriarchal family.

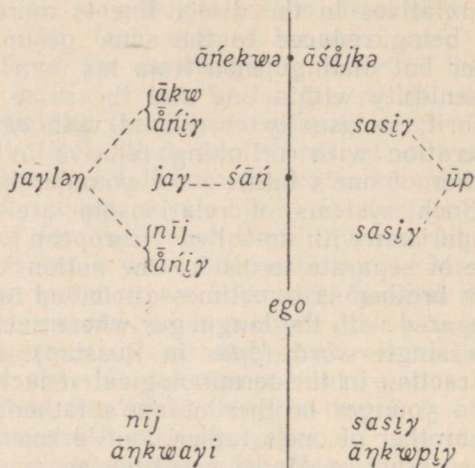
## List of names denoting relationship in Mansi

<i>āyi</i>	a daughter	<i>ākwekwə</i>	the wife of an elder brother of one's husband's father; an elder sister of one's husband's father; one's mother's elder sister
<i>āyayi</i>	a grand-daughter, one's daughter's daughter	<i>āña, āñakwə</i>	one's mother
<i>āyipiγ</i>	a grandson, one's daughter's son	<i>āñekwə</i>	a grandmother (one's mother's mother)
<i>aki</i>	one's father's father; an elder brother of one's father; one's husband's father; an elder brother of one's husband	<i>āñkw</i>	one's mother
<i>akimājkə</i>	one's husband's father; one's husband's grand-father; an elder brother of one's husband's father; the husband of an elder sister of one's husband's father; an elder brother of one's husband's mother; the husband of an elder sister of one's husband's mother	<i>āñkwayi</i>	a daughter of one's mother's sister
<i>ākw</i>	one's father's elder sister; one's mother's elder sister; the wife of one's father's elder brother; one's husband's mother	<i>āñkwpiγ</i>	a son of one's mother's sister
		<i>apiγ</i>	a grandchild; a nephew or niece
		<i>āpsi</i>	one's younger brother; a son of one's father's brother (younger than <i>ego</i> ); one's brother's son (younger than <i>ego</i> )
		<i>ās</i>	one's father
		<i>āsājka</i>	a grandfather (one's mother's father)
		<i>āta</i>	one's father

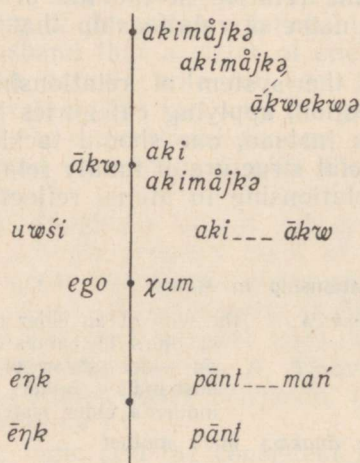
Father's tribe



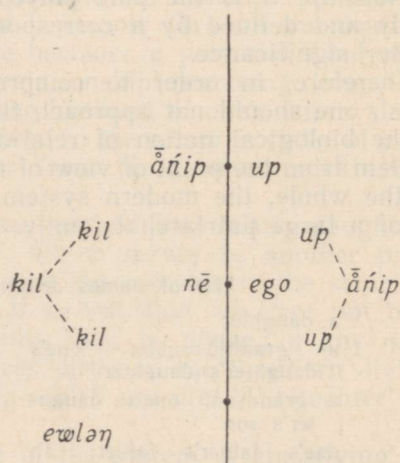
Mother's tribe



Husband's tribe



Wife's tribe



- āma one's mother  
 āñiy one's elder brother's wife;  
 one's mother's sister;  
 one's step-mother  
 āñip one's wife's mother; the  
 wife of one's wife's brother  
 āpa a grandfather (one's father's  
 father)  
 āpariś a grandfather (one's father's  
 father); an ancestor  
 in one's father's line  
 ēηk a daughter of one's father's  
 sister; one's sister's  
 daughter; one's husband's  
 younger sister; one's hus-

- band's niece; a step-  
 daughter (from a female  
 person's point of view)  
 ēś one's younger sister; a  
 daughter of one's father's  
 brother (younger than  
 ego); one's brother's  
 daughter (younger than  
 ego)  
 ewlən a daughter of one's wife's  
 sister; a step-daughter  
 (from a male person's  
 point of view)  
 χum one's husband; a male per-  
 son  
 jay one's father



<i>jaɣlən</i>	the husband of one's mother's sister; one's step-father		brother; one's husband's nephew; a step-son (from a female person's point of view)
<i>jaɣayi</i>	a sister	<i>pɪy</i>	a son
<i>jaɣpɪy</i>	a brother	<i>pɪyayi</i>	a grand-daughter (one's son's daughter)
<i>kaŋk</i>	one's elder brother; one's father's younger brother; a son of one's father's brother (older than <i>ego</i> ); one's brother's son (older than <i>ego</i> )	<i>pɪypɪy</i>	a grandson (one's son's son)
<i>kās</i>	one's younger brother; one's brother's son (younger than <i>ego</i> )	<i>śāñ</i>	one's mother
<i>kil</i>	one's wife's sister; the husband of one's wife's sister	<i>śāśekwə</i>	a grandmother (one's father's mother)
<i>mañ</i>	one's son's wife; the wife of one's younger brother; the wife of a younger blood relative; the wife of one's husband's younger brother	<i>sasiy</i>	one's mother's brother; a son of one's mother's brother
<i>ñawram</i>	a child	<i>up</i>	one's wife's father; one's wife's brother
<i>nē</i>	one's wife; a female person	<i>ũp</i>	the wife of one's mother's brother
<i>nij</i>	one's mother's younger sister; a daughter of one's mother's brother	<i>uwsi</i>	one's elder sister; one's father's younger sister; a daughter of one's father's brother (older than <i>ego</i> ); one's sister's daughter (older than <i>ego</i> ); one's husband's elder sister
<i>pānt</i>	a son of one's father's sister; one's sister's son; one's husband's younger	<i>vāps</i>	one's daughter's husband; one's sister's husband

КЛАПА ВАВРА (Тарту)

### ПРИНЦИПЫ КЛАССИФИКАЦИИ ТЕРМИНОВ РОДСТВА МАНСИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Мансийские термины родства классифицируются в зависимости: 1) от пола родственника; 2) от того, принадлежит ли он (она) к прямой или побочной линии родства; 3) принадлежит ли родственник к роду отца, матери, мужа или жены. Роды отца и мужа — наиболее близкие для *ego* («свой род»), названия определенных групп родственников в родах отца и мужа совпадают; роды матери и жены определяются как «чужой род». Имеет значение также пол связующего родственника; 4) от поколения (здесь более важную роль играет старшинство относительно родственника по прямой линии; таким образом старший брат *ego* объединяется в одну группу с младшим братом отца, но отделен от своего младшего брата); 5) от старшинства в пределах одного поколения.

Для понимания системы родства в мансийском языке к ней следует подходить не с категориями, основанными на биологических понятиях родства, а с точки зрения социальной структуры родственных отношений.

Современная система родства мансийского языка в своих основных чертах отражает жизнь патриархальной большой семьи.