Kinship Terms in English and Arabic:
A Contrastive Study

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Abstract

This paper investigates the nature of kinship terms according to various views in both English and Arabic . Kinship is the most basic principle of organizing individuals into social groups, roles, and categories. Some form of organization based on parentage and marriage is present in every human society. However, the nuclear family household is still the fundamental institution responsible for rearing children and organizing consumption. In nonindustrial contexts, kinship units normally have a much wider array of functions. They often serve as basic units of production, political representation and even as religious bodies for the worship of spiritual beings, who are themselves considered members of the kingroup. Many societies construct kinship groupings, roles, and relationships by tracing descent exclusively through the male - **patrilineal** - or female - **matrilineal** - line. Thus this paper will shed light on different views that are related to kinship terms in different societies according to the linguistic and/or religious point of views.

1-Kinship Terms in English

1-1 Introduction

Generally speaking, language can be considered as the principal means whereby people conduct their social lives. When language is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways. But people use language differently because of the different linguistic varieties of each language. These varieties can be attributed to the cultural differences among the languages. Thus, we can say that linguistic variation is tied very much to the existence of different cultures.

However, kinship (kin: henceforth) may be described as the bond of relationship created by procreation and defined by society, and the conception of what constitutes kin, will, therefore, be found to vary according to the social organization of the community in which the term is applied. It is significant of the general conception of kin that a distinction has to be drawn, almost at the outset, between biological and sociological parenthood; for in many societies the actual begetter of a child is not necessarily the individual treated by him as his father. Thus, where the levirate system is in force it is usual for a younger brother to marry his deceased elder brother's widow, and this system is frequently the survival of a period when a younger brother had access to his elder brother's wife until he was able to procure one for himself (Morgan: 1871:440-48).

1-2 Kinship Terminology

Some languages make it easy to express concepts which in other languages are at best very difficult to express. Such a difficulty may be attributed to the linguistic differences in each language as well as the different cultures in each society. Kin terminology represents a more interesting example of linguistic differences that are associated with culture. Kin terminology refers to the terms used for referring to people to whom one is related. Such terms are important not only as indicating the state of the person addressed or mentioned with reference to the speaker, but also because there often is no other mode of address (Hudson, 1984: 89; Levinson,1983:70-1).

Thus, in pre-state societies, prior to the Urban Revolution of five thousand years ago, access to the social product was largely obtained through kin. For this reason, the study of kin is vital to an understanding of the classless societies that flourished for the millions of years before the emergence of class rule. Even after the rise of the state, however, kin continued to play a vital role, and continues to be important today(Wardhaugh,1986:227).

People everywhere organize their domestic lives (cooking, eating, sleeping, procreation, and child care) through the family. But both the forms and precise functions of the family vary widely from society to society(ibid).

Many sociologists and anthropologists see the nuclear family as a universal unit, the basic building block of all societies. According to Murdock (1949), for example, the nuclear family is a cultural universal that fulfills basic functions essential for social life. These functions are:

1. **Sex,** the husband-wife relationship permits satisfaction of sexual needs in a legitimate manner that diminishes sexual competition;

2. **Reproduction,** necessary if society is to continue;

3.**Socialization** (or enculturation), newborn infants receive their basic socialization within the family unit; and

4. **Economic,** the family is a unit of consumption built upon a sexual division of labor in which the man provides protection and sustenance to permit the woman to provide reproductive functions (cooking, child care, etc.).

A kin terminology describes a specific system of familial relationship. The anthropologist Morgan (1818-1881) argued that kin terminologies reflect different sets of distinctions. For example, most kin terminologies distinguish between sexes (i.e., the difference between a brother and a sister) and between generations (i.e, the difference between a child and a parent). Moreover, he argued, kin terminologies distinguish between relatives by blood and marriage (although recently some anthropologists have argued that many societies define kin in terms other than 'blood').

But Morgan cited in Encyclopedia Britannica (1968:478) also observed that different languages (and thus, societies) organize these distinctions differently. Morgan tries to classify kin terms and terminologies as either descriptive or classificatory. He (Ibid) defines descriptive terms as referring to only one type of relationship, while classifications ones as referring to many types of relationships. For example in Western societies there is only one way to express relationship with one's brother (brother- parent's son); thus, in Western society the word "brother" functions as a descriptive term. On the other side, there is more than one way to express relationship with one's cousin, i.e., the word cousin may refer to mother's brother's son, mother's sister's son, father's brother's son, father's sister's son, and the like). Consequently the word "cousin" is regarded as a classificatory term. Thus the Arab system is completely descriptive and assigns a different kin term to each distinct relative. Hence, in contrast with the western society, the word cousin is regarded as a descriptive term in Arab society since Arabic language has distinct terms for male or female and **patrilineal** or **matrilineal** cousin (Chambers's Encyclopedia, 1962:231; Hatch and Brown,1995:34).

Fox (1996: 27) describes the kin terms and marriage as the basic facts of life. He goes on to assert that they are about birth, conception and death. However, kin appears as a huge field of social and mental realities stretching between two poles. One is highly abstract: it concerns kin terminologies and the marriage principles or rules they implicitly contain or that are associated with them. The other is highly

concrete: it concerns individuals and their bodies, bodies marked by the position of the individuals in kin relations. Deeply embedded in them are the representations that legitimize these relations through an intimacy of blood, bone, flesh, and soul. Between these two poles lie all the economic, political, and symbolic stakes involved from the outset in the interplay of kin relations or, conversely, that make use of them (Godelier, 1998: 387).

According to stone (1997: 5), kin is the recognition of a relationship between persons based on descent or marriage. If the relationship between one person and another is considered by them to involve descent, the two are "consanguine" (blood) relatives. If the relationship has been established through marriage, it is affinal.

The socially recognized relationship between people in a culture who are or are held to be biologically related or who are given the status of relatives by marriage, adoption, or other ritual. Kin is the broad-ranging term for all the relationships that people are born into or create later in life and that are considered binding in the eyes of their society. Although customs vary as to which bonds are accorded greater weight, their very acknowledgment defines individuals and the roles that society expects them to play (Encyclopedia Britannica at http: // www. Britannica. com.).

According to Tonkinson (1991: 57) kin is considered as a system of social relationship that are expressed in a biological idiom, using terms like "mother" ,son, and soon. Kin is best visualized as a mars of networks of relatedness, not two of which are identical, that radiate from each individual. Consequently, kin encompasses the norms, roles, institutions and cognitive processes referring to all the social relationships that people are born into or create later in life, and that are expressed through, but not limited to, a biological idiom.

1-3 Kinship as an ordinary conception.

Ordinary kin has been, for more than one country, pursued most assiduously, and most theoretically, by social and cultural anthropologists, under two labeling: consanguine relations, by blood (descent theory), and affine relations, by marriage (alliance theory). Kin terms are employed as a comparative cultural analysis by 19th century pioneers (such as Morgan 1871), kin theory became a constant for anthropological analysis a cross functionalist, structuralists, symbolic, cognitive, Marxist, and other paradigms (Radcliffe-Brown: 1941; Evans-pritchard 1951; Levi-Strauss 1969; Pitt-Rivers 1973: 89-105).

Meanwhile, kin theory developed a sophisticated analytic formalism replete with standardized neologistic terminology, forbiddingly complex diagrams, and algebraic matriculations- the "hands science" of social anthropology, holding promise for rigorous, empirical, comparative social study, and the discernment of homothetic propositions (i.e. Murdock 1949). In 1998 Fox stated that "kinship is to anthropology what logic is to philosophy." (Fox 1998: 10), i.e. rigorous, central, assertion.

Naively, kin seems to entail the study of biological relationships realized that what they were studying was not biological per se, but rather a social construction whose relation to biology could not be ascertained a priori.

However, recent kin studies tend to situate kin in its social and cultural context, attending to history, global political and economic forces, and individual practice, embracing process and conflict, and producing idiographic rather than nomothetic claims. There has been a sharp turn away from presupposing the cross-cultural validity of formal analysis, and an increased openness and sensitivity towards exploring kin's local cognate concepts, whose particular logic needs to be worked out historically and ethnographically, through a broad spectrum of disciplinary perspectives. This openness and sensitivity, in turn, makes it impossible to refuse

consideration of social structures metaphorically linked to those concepts, such as so-called "pseudo-kinship", including the spiritual kind. Metaphorical conception of kin (ibid).

2-3 Pseudo kinship

It is an anthropological term designating social relations locally named kin terms, but also locally recognized to fall outside the literal scope of kin relations (however these may be locally construct in relation to local concepts of biological relation). Such kin is "pseudo" in that the metaphorical quality of the kin terms used to describe its relations is locally and openly acknowledged.

Kin conceptions of biological relation, and definitions of metaphor are social constructions, subjectively understood, no precise, objective criteria are ever available to differentiate 'real' (ordinary) and pseudo-kin. Even if the boundary between 'literal' and metaphorical uses of kin terminology can be sharply drawn by social agents (a condition which cannot be presumed), close relations between ordinary and pseudo-kinship are likely to abstain, not least due to shared terminology. Thus, 'ordinary' and 'pseudo' kinship cannot be profitably studied in isolation; they should be considered together. But opening the door to pseudo- kinship entails inclusion of potentially far different, more variable, assortments of human relations which, though metaphorically related to biological ones, may be grounded in non- biological ideologies (Norbeck and Befu 1958: 102-17).

The standard typology of pseudo-kinship, due to Pitt-Rivers (1968:408-12), differentiates three subtypes (without denying between them): (1) the figurative use of kin terms, which may also indicate a special status; (2) the attribution (rather than ascription) of ordinary kin status, often called "fictive kinship"; and (3) institutionalized relationships resembling kin, which are therefore named using kin terms, yet which are recognized as being entirely distinct.

Both (1) and (2) are metaphorical extensions of ordinary kin, ultimately grounded by reference to biological ideology. In (1) use of kin terms is merely an expression of attitude, not corresponcting to any social institution, and not implying real kin status even as a fiction. Thus, in many societies children respectfully address parents, friends as 'uncle' or 'aunt'. Such uses are metaphoric, but nevertheless assimilated to biological relations, hence grounded in biological ideology. Likewise, in (2) kinship terms are metaphors supporting relations lacking independent ideological support; here the kin term is recognized as apt if fictional- the norms governing the way a fictive father treats his fictive son draw upon norms of ordinary fatherhood, because it is only the ideology of ordinary kinship that allows the fictive relation to exist (Ibid).

2-4 Symbols used to represent kinship relations

Anthropologist and other specialists of genealogies usually use a simple set of symbols to represent persons and connections. These symbols were largely inherited from the International federation of Egeni Organization in (1932) by the Sociological Research Committee of the Royal Anthropological Society of Great Britain.

In the following lines, there are specific symbols used to represent kin connections. A male, whether a boy or man, is usually represented by a triangle. A female, whether girl or woman, as a circle. Additionally, there is a third symbol, the square, which means that gender difference is not of any importance, that the person can in a specific context be a male or a female. For example the English word "cousin" can be applied to a female, as well as to a male cousin. If it is wanted to represent what type of persons the word "cousin" designates, a square, instead of a triangle and a circle, is sufficient (Stone, 1997:9).

This draws us to the first important rule to remember in kinship studies and genealogical representations. It is the rule of economy: graphic representations and verbal descriptions should always use the shortest and most efficient way and symbols to describe a relationship, unless other ways and symbols and information that changes substantially the understanding of the relationship. Connection symbols could be drawn as in the following:
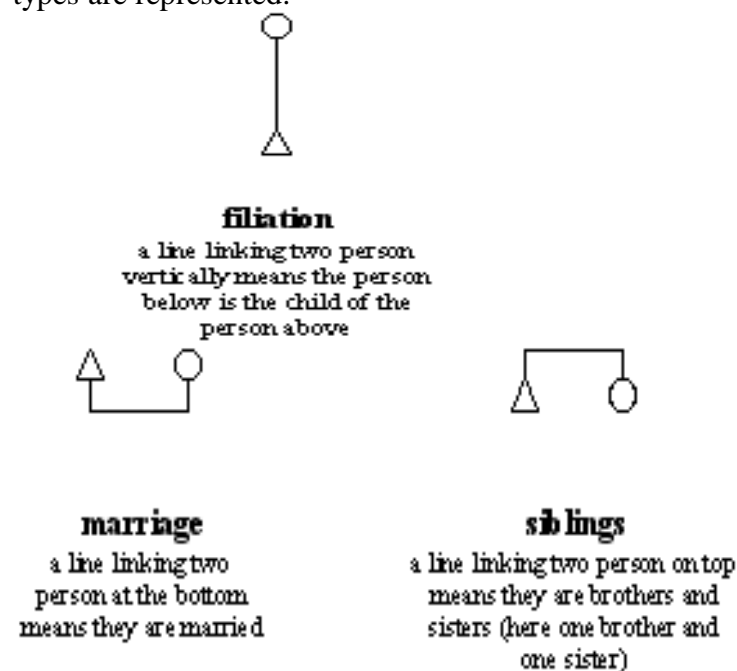
1-○ female. A circle represents A woman or a girl.

2-▲ male. a triangle represents a man or a boy.

3-□ male or female. a square represents a person or position for which gender is not relevant.

The aforementioned symbols lack many other manifestations that show the kind of the connection or the relationship that exist between the persons. Thus, there is a need to add symbols that allow showing how these persons are connected to each other. There are three types of connections: two persons are connected because they are "married", two persons are connected because they are "siblings" (brothers and sisters), and two persons are connected because one is the parent (father or mother) of the other.The latter type is called "filiation"(Dousset, 2002:7).

A marriage connection, also called alliance, is represented as a line that goes from below a person to below another person. A sibling connection is represented as a line that goes from top of a person to the top of another person. A filiation (parent-children) connection is represented as a line that goes from below a person to the top of another person. In the illustration below you can see how the three basic connection types are represented.

filiation
a line linking two person
vertically means the person
below is the child of the
person above

marriage
a line linking two
person at the bottom
means they are married

siblings
a line linking two person on top
means they are brothers and
sisters (here one brother and
one sister)

These connections are combined in genealogies, and every person is linked to one other person through at least one of these connection types.

2-5 English Kin Terms

English kin terms could have the following principles:

1-The system is bilateral (no distinctions between father's and mother's relatives).

2-Distinctions mark differences in sex, generation, and collateral kinship distance.

3-Each family relationship receives a distinct term; more distant relatives are grouped into general categories(Sills,1968:390-99).

English kin terms can be summarized in the following diagrams:
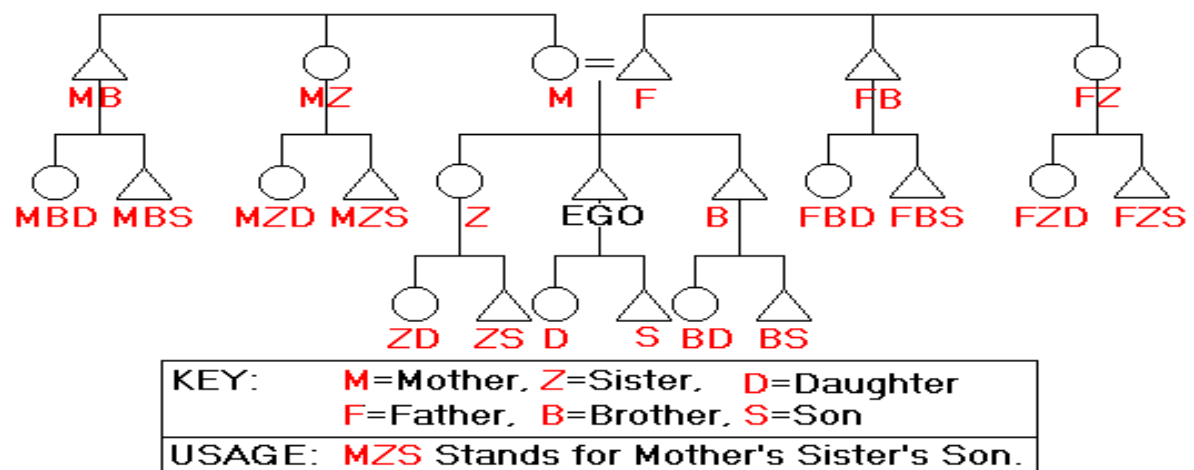
Kin Term	Kin Type
Father	F
Mother	M
Uncle	FB, MB
Brother	B
Cousin	FBS, FBD, FZS, FZD MBS, MBD, MZS, MZD, FFBSS, Etc.
Son	S
Nephew	BS, ZS
Aunt	FZ, MZ
Sister	Z
Daughter	D
Nephew	BS, ZS
Niece	BD, ZD

English Kin Terms Designated by Kin Type
2-6.Componential Analysis and Kin terms

Some languages make it easy to express certain concepts or words such as kin terms which in other languages are at best very difficult to express. Thus translating kin terms from one language to another is regarded as an illusion to be believed (Bolinger, 1975:192-4 ;Hudson,1984:89; Prasithrathsint,1990;1996: 261).

An explicit analysis of kin terms in a particular language yields a clear picture of the kin system in the culture with which the language is associated. Hence the use of kin

terms varies from culture to culture, so that what is viewed as an uncle/nephew relationship in English may be regarded as father/son or something else in another language (Nida,1975:33; Elgin,1979:27; Wardhaugh,2002:220-8) To understand and show the denotative meanings of a system of kin terms ethnosemanticists turn to an approach to lexical study known as **componential analysis**, which was introduced into ethnosemantic studies by Goodenough (1956)and Lounsbury (1956). The approach has been used with other lexical fields but seems to suit best an analysis of kin terms. This may be due to the fact that kin terms are of an appropriately limited, number and clear-cut denotations.

In Arabic like many other languages (German, Thai) has male/female distinctions for cousin, nephew, aunt, uncle. Also, Arabic language distinguishes between relatives on the father's side and on the mother's side a distinction which English lacks(Hatch and Brown,1995:33-6; Krifka, 2001:1).This can be attributed to the fact that English language has no lexical or syntactic markers to distinguish between the two sexes while in Arabic language there are certain syntactic markers to distinguish between the two sexes. Thus Arabs use the prefixes ابـن(son of) for male relative and ينـت (daughter of) for female kin; and they use the suffix (ه) for female human kin as ابـن-ابنـة (son-daughter)or حفيـدة حفيـد(grandson-granddaughter) etc(palmer,1981:82).

Words as lexical entities have some contrasting features that could be of value in distinguishing between one word and another take for example the contrast between generation in kin can be observed, like the contrast between older and younger, male and female. The lexical items are in the boxes of the chart and the labels show the contrast in meaning of these lexical items. It is an easy task to correlate each lexical item with people in the non-linguistic world and what they call one another or how they refer to one another(Larson,1984:80-2). Consider the following diagram :

	lineal		colineal		ablineal
	masculine	feminine	masculine	feminine	
Second generation Previous Previous generation	grandfather	grandmother	uncle	aunt	cousin
	father	mother			
Same generation	ego		brother	Sister	
Next generation	son	daughter	nephew	niece	
Second generation following	grandson	granddaughter			

2-Kinship Terms in Arabic language
2-1 Introduction
The term kinship has been given much more attention by the Divine Authority as well as the Arabic Islamic scholars since it is related to every part of life and every other social domains. Thus Allah the Almighty has mentioned the term kinship (نسب) in the Holy Quranic verses to indicate the importance of such a term in social life among the human beings as in the following:

1- "وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنْ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا")

(الفرقان:54)

(It is He Who has created man from water: then has He established relationships of lineage and marriage: for thy Lord has power (over all things).(**Yusufali 25:54**)

This can be attributed to the fact that the social domain of kin covers a broad range of relations such as genealogy and descent, marriage and divorce, inheritance and succession, etc. Thus kinship is a socially recognized relationship between people who are held to be biologically related or who are given the status of relatives by marriage, adoption or other ritual relations (الأندلســــي, 1978:235; Encyclopedia Britanica, 1968:163a)

2-2-Kinship According to the Islamic Point of View

Islam has focused on respecting the ties of kin, or what is said in Arabic (Alrahm) (صـــلة الـــرحم), among the members of the family and other relatives. Such a respect can be attributed to the fact that Allah the Almighty will reward and grant, in this world and hereafter, any person who maintains and fosters his/her ties of kinship. The reward in this life takes the form of an increase in income and wealth and longer life as well as being loved by his/her relatives (Ahmad, 2008:401-403). But, on the other hand, a person who severs his ties of kinship (قطيعة الرحم) will be punished in this world and hereafter. Such facts of maintaining or severing the ties of kinship terms can be seen in different Quranic verses as:

1 – وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا–– (البقرة:83)

(--- treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people;) **(Ali 2:8)**

2– (فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ)(محمد:22)

(Then, is it to be expected of you, if ye were put in authority, that ye will do mischief in the land, and ***break your ties of kith and kin***?).(**Ali 47:22**)

3– (يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالاً كَثِيراً وَنِسَــاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيباً) (النساء:1)

(O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you.) **(Ali 4:1)**

4- (إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَى وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُــمْ لَعَلَّكُـمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ) (النحل:90)

(Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition.)(**Ali 16:90**)

5-((وَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَاناً إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلا تَقُلْ لَهُمَــا أُفٍّ وَلا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلاً كَرِيماً(23) وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَــا كَمَــا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيراً (24) رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ إِنْ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْــأَوَّابِينَ غَفُــوراً (25) وَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَى حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيراً (26) إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ وَكَانَ الشَّــيْطَانُ

لِرَبِّهِ كَفُوراً(27) وَإِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمُ ابْتِغَاء رَحْمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُل لَّهُمْ قَوْلاً مَّيْسُوراً ﴿٢٨﴾)
(الإسراء:23-27) .

(Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye *be kind to parents*.23 Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, *say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them but address them in terms of honor.*,24 *And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: "My Lord! bestow on them Thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood*." 25. Your Lord knoweth best what is in your hearts: if ye do deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again (in true penitence). 26. *And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want*, and to the wayfarer: but squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. 27. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones; and the Evil One is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful. 28. And even if thou hast to turn away from them in pursuit of the Mercy from thy Lord which thou dost expect, yet speak to them a word of easy kindness.) (**Ali 17:23-29**)

It is important, therefore, to shed light on what is meant by maintaining and fostering the ties of kin as they are mentioned above in the verses of the Holy Quran.According to the Islamic and Arabic rules, a person's relatives are collectively called his ***Riham*** (الــرحم) ('uterus').Linguistically speaking ,this word means 'womb'. This ***word Riham*** (الــرحم) which is given to kinship is derived from the divine attribute of compassion and mercy ***Al- Rahman*** (الــرحمن).Thus ***Al Riham*** (الــرحم) is used to include all the person's relatives whether patrilineal descent or matrilineal. Therefore maintaining the ties of kinship (صــلة الــرحم) can be defined as politeness, kind treatment and concern for all one's relatives even if distantly related, corrupt, non-Muslim, or unappreciative (Baig,2003; الشــيرازي,2005:102-7).On the other hand, the person who severs the ties of kin (قطيعــة الــرحم) will be cursed and deprived from the Mercy of Allah the Almighty. Thus severing of kin ties will be regarded a great sin which will weaken the structure of Islamic society and undermine its very existence (Islamic Voice, 1999: **Ahmed, 2008:404-5).**

Islamic rules have urged Muslims to study and develop their kin relations by teaching respect of family and elders and have celebrated sacrifice of self for family love (Ibn Khaldun (1958: 128). Ibn Khaldun states that all the social structure of the Arab tribal societies is rested on respecting kin relations because it has a central role in peoples' survival and thus he introduced a key term for such a phenomenon as (**Asabiyya**). Linguistically, **'Asabiyya'** comes from the Arabic word **'asabah'**, which means the relatives of the person from the father side. These relatives are called **'asabah'** because they strengthen and defend the person that makes him stronger. The tribal '**Asabiyya'** in the Arab society has stemmed from andocentric notion of unity by blood coming down through generations from one-shared ancestor, usually the great grandfather. Ibn Khaldun describes 'Asabiyya' as a bio-psychological, social, political, and economic aspects all mixed in one phenomenon and can be regarded as the main source of social obligations, responsibility, norms, ethics, and the unity of identity(ibid: 289).

2-3 Family and kinship patterns in Arabic

The Arabs are a proud and sensitive people whose culture is mainly derived from three key factors: family, language, and religion. No adequate understanding of Arab culture is possible without first examining these three major elements and the pervading impact they have had on their culture. To begin to understand the Arabs, one must first understand the Arabic family since it has been regarded as the basis of the Arab social structure. Thus the first major factor overshadowing all other societal demands of an Arab is that of family and kin. The kin characteristic includes a set of group dynamics that are built around the family. Any discussion of Arab culture must also include their dominant cultural concerns, such as continuation of the close knit family (Ibn Khaldun, 1958: 128-41).

Traditionally Arab Sociologists and religious legislators have stressed on the importance of the family unit as the basic social institution of society. The structure of the Arabic family is much more rigid and highly emphasized in comparison to the West. The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued and seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members(,1975 : 205 – الشــــيرازي الحسن,2005:86-7).

Parents are greatly respected in the Islamic tradition. In Arab culture, parents are responsible for children well into those children's adult lives, and children reciprocate by taking responsibility for the care of their aging parents—responsibilities that Arabs generally take on with great pride (ibid:87-95)(see 2-2).
In the traditional Arab family, the father represents the authority figure (patriarchal tradition), and in return he shoulders the major responsibilities towards his family members. The wife joins the kin group of her husband (patrilocal kin), while the children take up the father's family name (patrilineal descent). In that capacity, the father is assigned the role of the bread-winner or provider for his family. This role puts him at the top of the pyramidal structure of his family. Also this role carries with it unquestioning compliance with his instructions as well as respect from all family members. The mother is assigned the role of the housewife, and in that capacity, she is closer to the children and actually exercises power over them, though sometimes she may use the father to threaten them. Some scholars may interpret that as a matriarchal system alongside the patriarchal system in the Arab family. However, it is believed that this matriarchal system supports the existing patriarchy, as it solidifies the pyramidal structure of the family (العزاوي,1937:45; Nosseir,2003:3).

In Arabic families, younger fathers expected to provide for and support the other family members, while mother are to care for the children and the household. Then, once the children are grown, and the parents are aged, it is the children's responsibility to care for their parents – even if it's at the children's own expense (الخليفة, 1986:408-12; Nosseir, 2003:6).

The structure of the Arabic family is composed of four types of family units. The first and most simple structure is the nuclear unit (الأهل أو البيت) (the house), which consists of the father, mother, and offspring. This type of family unit is the least significant in the culture of the Arab world and is used to specify the actual residence of a family or the group of people who live under the same roof most of the time. The second familial unit is the (العائلــــة) (the extended family) or the joint family. It consists of father, mother, unwed children, as well as wedded sons and their wives and children, unwed paternal aunts, and, sometimes, unwed paternal uncles. In short, this

unit is composed of blood relatives plus women who were brought into the kin through marriage. This unit is an economic as well as a social unit and is governed by the grandfather or eldest male. The third type of blood kin unit is the (العشــــيرة) or clan. It consists of all individuals, male or female, who claim descent from the same paternal ancestor. The Arab village community is normally composed of three or four such (عشائر) clans, which may be called the (القبيلة), and each of these units of (عشـــائر) clans are composed of several joint families(العزاوي, 1937:45-57).

The Arab family is the center of all loyalty, obligation, and status of its members. The individual's loyalty and duty to his or her family are greater than any other social obligation. From birth until death, the Arab individual is always identified with other members of the joint family in name and social status. Once a child is born to a young couple, the people stop referring to the parents by their first names and begin calling them after the name of their child. Arabs used to call each others by using their euphemistic name 'surname' rather than the first name because such a euphemistic name will maximize and increase the honorific and respectable character of the person. Thus they say, for example, 'أبا الحسن' 'Father of Al-Hasan' and ' أم الحسن' 'Mother of Al-Hasan rather than to say the first name (ابن منظــور، 1955: 306).A child also adds the name of his father to his own name and often precedes it with the word (ابـــن), which means "son of". Unlike the western culture, Women are related in the same fashion through the patrilineal line, and they maintain such identification even after marriage; though women do not add their husband's name to their own after marriage. All members of a(العشيرة) clan identify and relate themselves to one another in a very systematic way. For example, a young man refers to every one of his fellow young men of the(العشيرة) as (ابـــن عـــم), or "paternal first cousin". The same for every one of the young women referring to each other as (بنـــت عـــم), or "paternal female cousin". Such a system of identification shows that the Arab is necessarily a family-oriented individual, and that he is always considered an integral part of a much larger family unit than the biological one. His loyalty is always greatest to those closest in kin, but it transcends even these individuals to include the (العشـــيرة)and village to which he belongs, rather than the place in which he may be living(Hammad et al,1999:17-19).

The cohesiveness of Arab families derives from a world view in which human society beyond the realm of kin, filled as it is with non-relatives, strangers and unreliable institutions, is construed as amoral and fundamentally dangerous: as a domain in which one's resources and affections are drained away from the 'loved ones, in-laws and kin' who truly deserve them. Unlike the western culture,one distinctive feature of Arab families is the relatively high rate of marriage between relatives (in particular, between cousins), a practice known as consanguinity (Shryock,2000:588).

Arab families are patrilineal, which designates descent from the father's side, as well as patriarchal, meaning conferring male power, responsibility and privilege. Patrilineality defines social relations, inheritance, joint economic operations, occasionally one's defense group, and control over female sexuality. Women continue to belong to their father's family after marriage. Their fathers and brothers can be a defense against their husbands – significantly more so than is the English norm

(البياتي,1975:377;Aswad,1996).For more details about the structure of Arab family see
(البياتي,1975:374-518).

A Muslim marriage is both a sacred act and a legal agreement, in which either partner is free to include legitimate conditions. From an Islamic perspective, marriage legalizes sexual relations and provides the framework for procreation. From a social perspective, it brings together not only the bride and groom but also their nuclear families and (**العشيرة**) (الشيرازي, 2005:128- 9).

The main factors considered in the selection of a mate are the character, reputation, and economic and social status of the prospective in-laws, followed by the character and reputation of the spouses-to-be. Preference is usually given to relatives(cousins) in which such a marriage among relatives is not acceptable in western society. Unlike the western culture, Islam does not accept the relations of boyfriend or girlfriend or adultery before marriage since such relations are not allowed according to the Islamic rules and they will break the system of the society by giving birth to illegal children whom they have not any kin relations(العزاوي, 1937:48).

Polygamy is legal under Shari'a law, with men permitted up to four wives as long as they can provide for them all and treat them equally. Reasons for polygamy include pressure to take part in an exchange marriage; the illness or infertility of the wife, or her failure to bear sons or to meet her husband's sexual needs. Traditionally, polygamy served as a way to enlarge the family and also as a way of providing the protection of marriage for women when there was a shortage of men or a very large number of widows and spinsters (الحسن, 1975 : 202 −3،الشيرازي, 2005:128- 9).

2-4 Kinship Terminologies in Arabic

The study of kin terminology in Arabic language has always been a major focus of Arab legal scholars,philologists,sociologists and rhetoricians and with good reason. The central events of human life—birth, family,marrage,inheritance and death—tend to occur within kin units in most societies, as do important biological processes such as eating, sleeping and growth. But although kin plays a vital role in organizing our biological processes, it is fundamentally cultural in nature. Kin systems are cultural constructs, not biological givens. Consequently, although there are some universal features of kin systems, the expression of these features varies from culture to culture. Thus, all societies recognize ties of parentage and siblinghood and extend these ties outward in kin systems of varying extent. The precise ensemble of such relationships, and the precise nature of rights and obligations they entail varies widely. However, all societies recognize marriage, but the precise nature of the marital bond, and anyone who may or must marry, also shows variation. Although it is reasonable enough, therefore, to see a biological base to kin, the cultural construct built upon this base varies, not randomly, but in accordance with definite principles. This variation can best be explained in terms of the material conditions of life of the Arab society in question(Howard,1989:204;Wikipedia,2008).

Linguistically speaking the kin categories found in Arabic language can be indicated by many terms in which all of them may refer to the kin terms. The most important terms that are used in this way involve what is called " النسب" (consanguinity) which refers to the relations built up from links between father,grandfathers,etc and their male children. The other term is called "الرحم " (womb) or (blood-relation) which denotes the relatives from the mother. The third

term is called "الحوبــة" or "القربــى" which refers to the relations of consanguinity and affinity (موسى والصعيدي, n.d :302-306).

Some Arab philologists and sociologists have graduated the structure of Arab family and its kin terms, from the largest number of kin members to the smallest ones, into seven social units. They start with 'الشــعب' (the public) , 'القبيلــة ' (the tribe), 'العتــرة'(the group), 'العشــيرة' (the clan), 'الذريــة' (the offspring), 'الفصــيلة'(the household), and then 'العائلة' (the family)(الثعــالبي،1938: 328).The tribe is composed by usually patrilineal landholding on their land and all the people from this tribe are descended from one father. Moreover, they call the members who are descended from the same father the **tribe 'القبيلــة'**, and if they are descended from the same father and mother, they will be called 'بنــو الأعيــان' (senior sons), but if they have the same father and different mothers, they will be nominated as 'بنو العــلات' (sons of relations), but if they have the same mother and different fathers, they will be named as 'بنــو الاخيــاف' (sons of) (ibid:326; النويري d.733 AH:295-303).

All human beings, and Arabs are among them, are connected to others by blood(علاقات الدم أو النسب) or (علاقات مصــاهرة او الســبب)marriage. Connections between people that are traced by blood relations (نسب) are known as consanguineal or descent relationships. For the sake of dividing the inheritance among the members of the relatives of blood relationships who deserve it after the death of the head of the family (ego),Arab legislators have arranged kin terms into three categories:

1-نــزل وان والولــد والأبوان, the parents (father and mother)and the sons of the head of the family (ego) with their descendants.Those relatives include: الأب (father) , الأم(mother), الابن(son), الابنة(daughter) , ابن الابن(son of the son or grandson) , بنــت (daughter of the son or granddaughter) , ابــن الابنــة(son of the daughter or grandson) , بنت الابنة(daughter of the daughter or granddaughter).

2-علــوا وان والأجــداد نزلوا وان وأولادهــم الأخــوة brothers and sisters of the ego with their descendents as well as the grandparents of the ego with their generations. Those relatives include: ابــن (niece), بنت الاخ (nephew), ابن الاخ (sister), الأخت (brother), الأخ (grandmother) الجدة (grandfather), الجد (niece), بنت الأخت (nephew), الأخت

3- والأعمــام والأخوال uncles and aunts of the ego. Those relatives include: العــم (uncle or father's brother), العمة (aunt or father's sister), الخــال (uncle or mother's brother), الخالة (aunt or mother's sister), ابن العم (cousin or son of father's brother), بنــت العــم (cousin or daughter of father's brother), ابن العمة (cousin or son of father's sister), بنت العمة (cousin or daughter of father's sister), ابن الخال (cousin or son of mother's brother), بنت الخال (cousin or daughter of mother's brother), ابــن الخالــة (cousin or son of mother's sister), بنت الخالة (cousin or daughter of mother's sister) (المحقــق الحلي,1969:9-33).Here, unlike English culture, it is seen that no two relatives share the

same term in Arab kin terms since we cannot use the same terms for that are related to uncle, aunt, cousin, niece, or nephew.

As for relatives based upon marriage include the wife(s) of the head of the family (ego).Such a relation can produce different kin terms such as الحمــو او العــم (**father's ego, or father's wife or generally father-in-law**), الحمـاة او العمـة (mother's ego or mother's wife or generally speaking mother-in-law), النســيب (brother of wife or brother of the husband(ego) or generally speaking brother-in-law), النسيبة (sister of the wife or sister of the husband (ego) or generally sister-in-law). Relationships based upon marriage or cohabitation between collaterals (people treated as the same generation) are *affinal* relationships. These connections are described by genealogies and/or academic kin charts, which trace the consanguineal and affinal relationships among individuals. Theoretically, the kinds of relationships that these charts and genealogies describe are the same for all individuals in all cultures—that is, any person can in principle trace a relationship to a spouse, children, children's children, parents, parents' siblings, the spouses and children of parents' siblings, and so on. However, people in different societies customarily calculate genealogical connections differently, recognizing some kinds of relationships and ignoring others. The culturally determined genealogies turn objective relationships of blood and marriage between people into kin. In no culture are all genealogical relationships recognized as kin relations. All people have kin relations about whom they know nothing, and everyone knows of relatives who have no importance in their lives. Genealogical relationships that have no social significance, either because the individuals whom they designate are unknown or because they are known but ignored, are not kin in the social sense. Genealogical ties that a culture chooses to recognize are what constitute an individual's kin(البياتي,1975:374-5).

The abovmentioned kin terms can be summarized in the following diagram:

2-5 The metaphorical use of kinship terms

In all languages or communities kin terms form a recognized vocabulary used to designate relatives and to identify the relationship of these relatives to ego or to each other . Yet these terms are not always used only in their literal, kin context. They may be employed in fictive kin contexts, or yet more metaphorically in other contexts. Thus in Arabic culture and in certain situations kin terms may be used metaphorically. Thus children and young people tend to address their parents' friends as, for example, Amm (عم) or Khaal (خال) (**uncle**) for the males and as Ammah (عمة)) or Khaalah (خالة) (**aunt**) for the females .Such a use of these terms are addressed in order to indicate signs of respects for the elder persons. Thus they say, for example, 'أبا الحسن' 'Father of Al-Hasan' or Al-Husseini' rather than to say the first name(ابن منظور, 1955:306).

Arabs tend to use the terms 'Abu' (أبـو) and 'um' (أم) in metaphorical contexts to call certain names of animals, things or people in order to avoid the explicit meaning of such names or to express a sense of humor or scorn or sometimes courage towards these names. Thus they may say" أبو دراص " which means (mouse), or say " هذه نار أبي حباحب " (fire of hubahib's father) which explicitly means that this person of such a description is thrifty; or " أبـو صـابر" which means the donkey; or " ام القـرى" which means the city of Mecca; or "أم الكتـاب " which means the Surat Alhamed in the Holy

Quran; and " " which indicates the female of chameleon and etc. (السـيوطي,n.d.:506-514).

In some Arab communities, friendship creates fictive kin groups which can substitute for extended biological families in providing extensive visiting, hospitality and support. Sometimes the Arab may stand 'العم' (the uncle) in a position of the father as well as the " (the aunt) in a position of the mother. This can be exemplified in the following Quranic verses:

6 – (أَمْ كُنتُمْ شُهَدَاء إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي قَالُواْ نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ)(ال عمران:133)

(Were ye witnesses when death appeared before Jacob? Behold, he said to his sons: "What will ye worship after me?" They said: "We shall worship Thy god and the god of thy fathers, of Abraham, Isma'il and Isaac,- the one (True) Allah: To Him we bow (in Islam)."(Ali 2:133)

7 – يوسف:)(وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ---)(100)
(And he raised his parents high on the throne (of dignity)(Ali 12:100),

Here in (6), The prophet Ishmael (**peace be upon him**) was an uncle of the prophet Jacob but he was regarded as a father as in (وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ), and in example (7) the mother of Josef (**peace be upon him**) was died in his birth but the term 'أبويه' refers to Josef's father the prophet 'Jacob' (**peace be upon him**) and (خالة) his aunt (the mother's sister of the prophet Josef and the wife of the prophet Jacob(**peace be upon him**)(الثعالبي,1938:558-9).

3-Conclusions

The present study has come out with the following findings:

1. Kin terms could be defined as the social agreement created among people.
2. Kin terminology refers to the linguistic differences which, in turn, related with culture as well as the social status to whom one is related.
3. Kin terminologies distinguish between sexes ,i.e., the difference between the family members and between relatives by blood and marriage.
4. Kin terms could be, mainly, classified into literal or metaphorical types. Ultimately grounded by references to biological ideology.
5. Arabs are proud and sensitive people to three factors: family, language, and religion , and thus to understand the Arabs, one must understand the Arabic family structure.
6. In the Islamic tradition kin relationships are highly emphasized and respected because they(kin relationships) constitute the core of the Arabic tribe and society.
7. In the Arabic family, the father represents the authority figure and at the same time the wife joins the kin group of the husband and the children join the father's family name.
8. Arabs prefer to refer to parents by the name of their first child such as أم الحسـن 'Mother of Al-Hasan' to add more honor and respect. Dissimilar to the Western culture in which women are related through the patrilineal line.
9. The Arabic kin system is described as a family –oriented individual because any young man can refer to every one of his fellow young man of the clan as (ابن عـم) or "paternal first cousin".

10. Some Arab philologists and sociologists have systemized the Arab family and its kin terms into seven units starting with: 'الشــــعب' (the public),'القبيلـــة' (the tribe),'الفصـــيلة'(the group), 'العشـــيرة' (the clan),'الذريـــة' (the offspring), 'العتـــرة' (the household), and then 'العائلة' (the family).

11. Arab legislators have arranged the kin terms of the members of the relatives of blood relationships who deserve inheritance into : **a**. the parents (father and mother) and the sons of the head of the family (ego) with their descendants, **b**.brothers and sisters of the ego with their descendants as well as the grandparents of the ego with their generation, **c**. uncles and aunts of the ego.

12. Kin terms, in Arabic culture, could be used metaphorically by addressing their parents' friend as , for instance Am (عــم) or khaal (خــال) (uncle) for the males and Ammah (عمــة) or khaalah (خالــة) (aunt) for the females. This metaphoric use is meant to imply signs of respect for the persons.

13. It is found that in modern industrial communities family structures have been weakened by the dominance of the market economy and the provision of state organized social services.

14. Preference is usually given to the marriage among relatives(cousins) in which such a marriage among relatives is not acceptable in western society.

15. Unlike the western culture, Islam does not accept the relations of boyfriend or girlfriend or adultery before marriage since such relations are not allowed according to the Islamic rules and they will break the system of the society by giving birth to illegal children whom they have not any kin relations.

16. The Arab system is completely descriptive and assigns a different kin term to each distinct relative. Hence the western society regards the word "cousin" as a classificatory term while the word cousin is regarded as a descriptive term in Arab society since Arabic language has distinct terms for male or female and patrilineal or matrilineal cousin.

17. English language has no lexical or syntactic markers to distinguish between the two sexes while in Arabic language there are certain syntactic markers to distinguish between them.

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