

**THE MISSING 'BROTHER' AND 'SISTER'
IN THE MOTUAN VOCABULARY**

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INTRODUCTION

The title “The missing 'brother' and 'sister' in the Motuan vocabulary” has nothing to do with a missing person in a detective scene, rather a little to do with vocabulary and a lot to do with a kinship system. Thus this presentation is about the kinship system of the Motuan society in Central Province, Papua New Guinea.

INTRODUCTION

To begin with, kingship is one of the main branch of study in the field of Anthropology. According to Fox (1967;33) kinship is simply “the relations between 'kin', i.e. persons, related by real, putative or fictive consanguinity.”

By 'blood' Fox meant one's genetic relations and by 'consanguinity' he meant one's relation simply defined “*by the society*” as consanguine.

INTRODUCTION

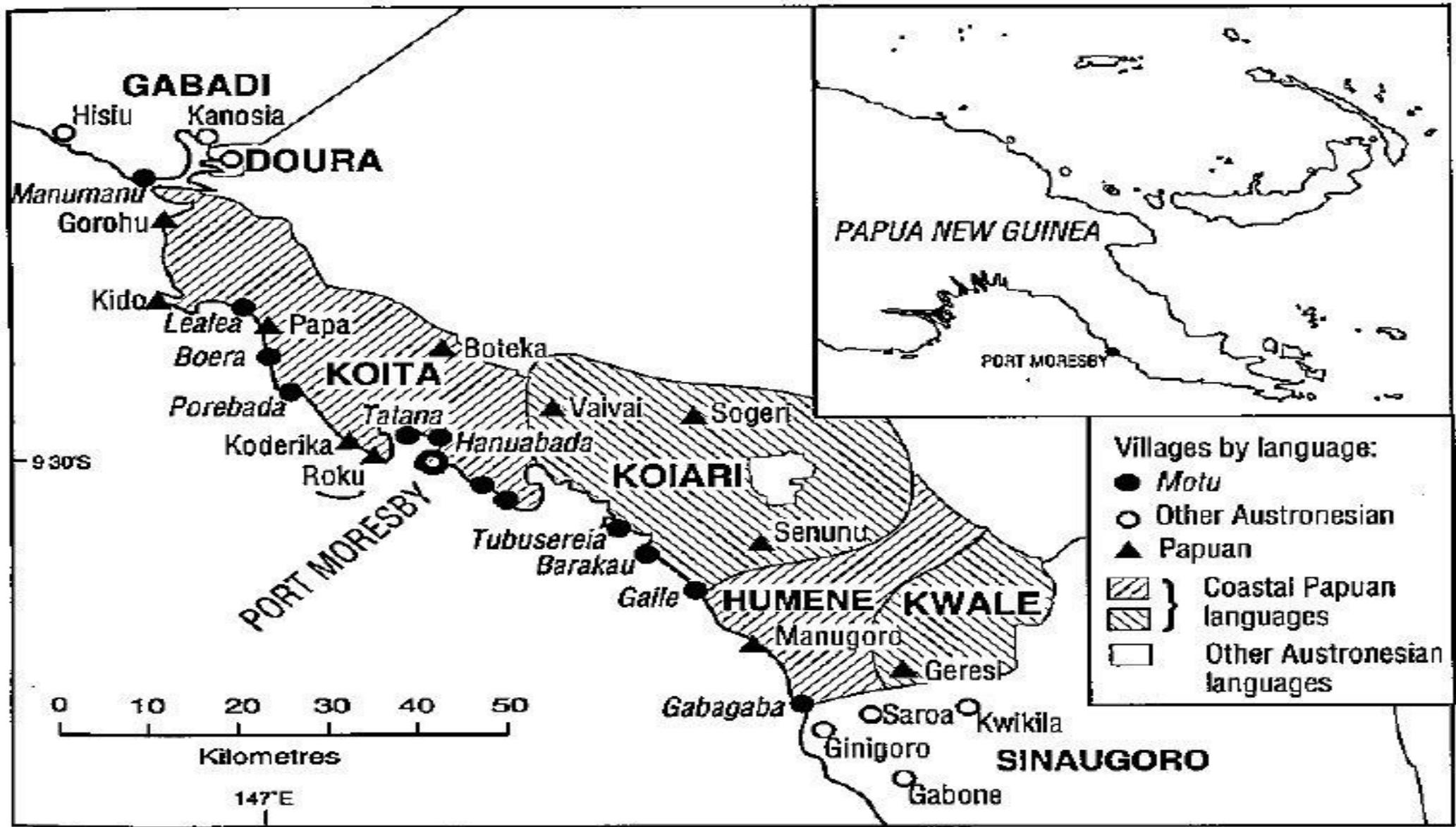
In the 19th century, the works of Louise Henry Morgan (1871) identified and classified six systems of kinship: Eskimo, Hawaiian, Iroquois, Sudan, Crow, and Omaha.

As stated by Groves (1996) the Motu kinship terminology is of the Hawaiian type. This will be discussed a little later.

INTRODUCTION ON 'MOTU'

The word “motu” means 1. discontinuity, that is, irregular continuity, and; 2. ‘to sink to the bottom of the sea’ (Avei-Hosea, 1998).

MOTU



MAP 1.8 DISCONTINUOUS LANGUAGES – MOTU, PNG

Avei-Hosea D. 1998. A Description of Young Generation Motu Speakers' Treatment of English Loanwords. South Illinois University, Illusions

MOTU POPULATION

According to the 2008 census, Motu population was 39, 000 however, since there are no updated census, it can be estimated that this figure has gone up, but the exact number cannot be guessed.

PATRILINEAL SOCIETY IN PNG

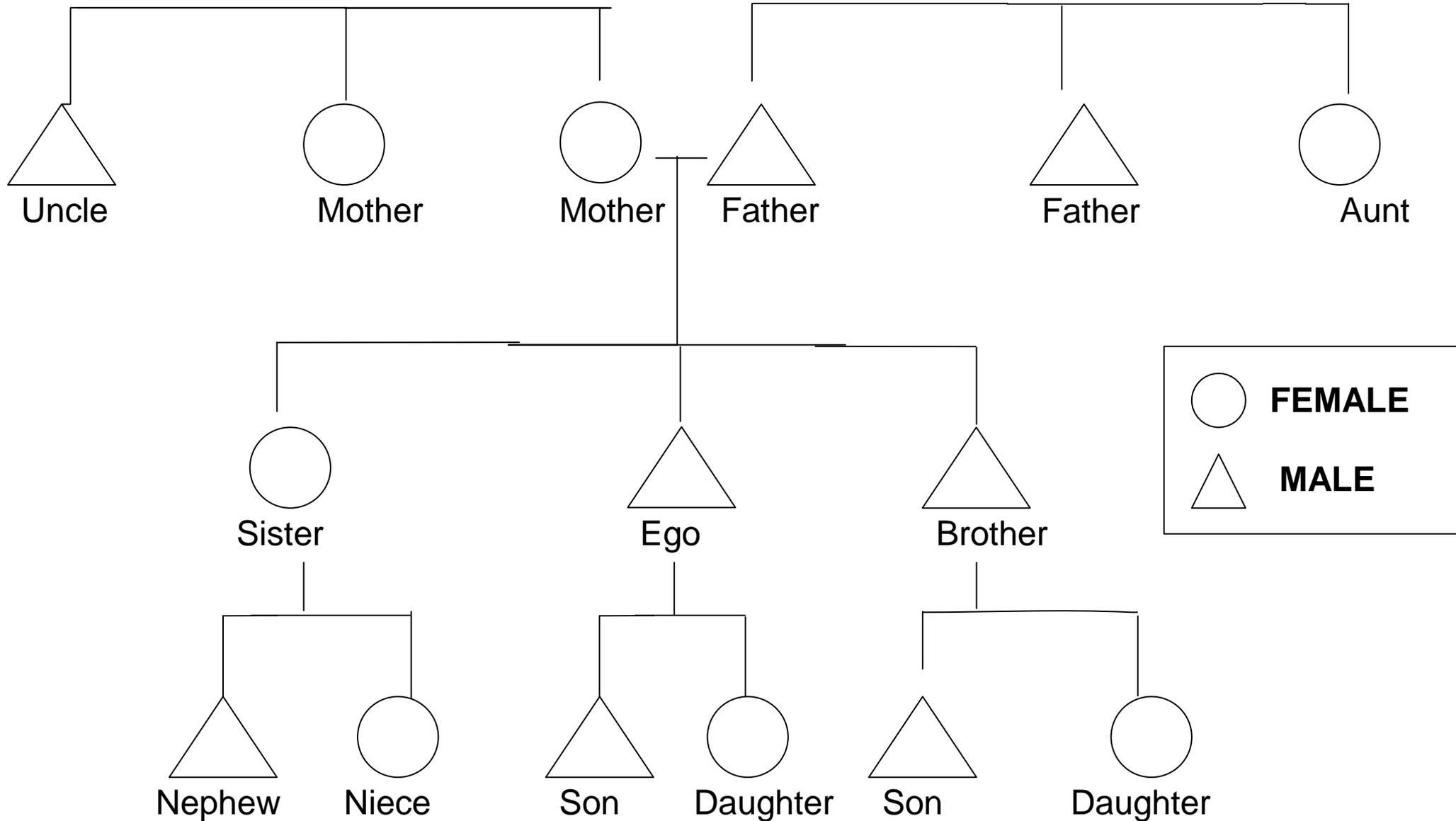
In Papua New Guinea (PNG), there coexists the patrilineal and matrilineal societies. In this presentation, the focus will be on a patrilineal society. In PNG almost all the societies are patrilineal except in some parts of Milne Bay, the East New Britain and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Patrilineal societies trace their descents through the male lineage. That is, the *ego* calls all his father's brothers and cousin brothers from his father's side (male parallel cousins) “father” and all his mother's sisters and cousin sisters from his mother's side (female parallel cousins) “mothers”.

PATRILINEAL SOCIETY IN PNG

On the other hand, father's sisters and cousin sisters from the father's mother's side (cross-cousins) are “aunts,” and mother's brothers and cousin brothers from the mother's father's side (cross-cousins) are “uncles”. Furthermore, the male ego regards his parallel cousins as both “brother” and “sister” however, he regards both his cross-cousins as “cousin”. The same applies for the female ego. In the male ego's offspring's generation, the ego will refer to his brothers' children as his “children” but his sisters' children as “nephew.” Likewise for the female ego.

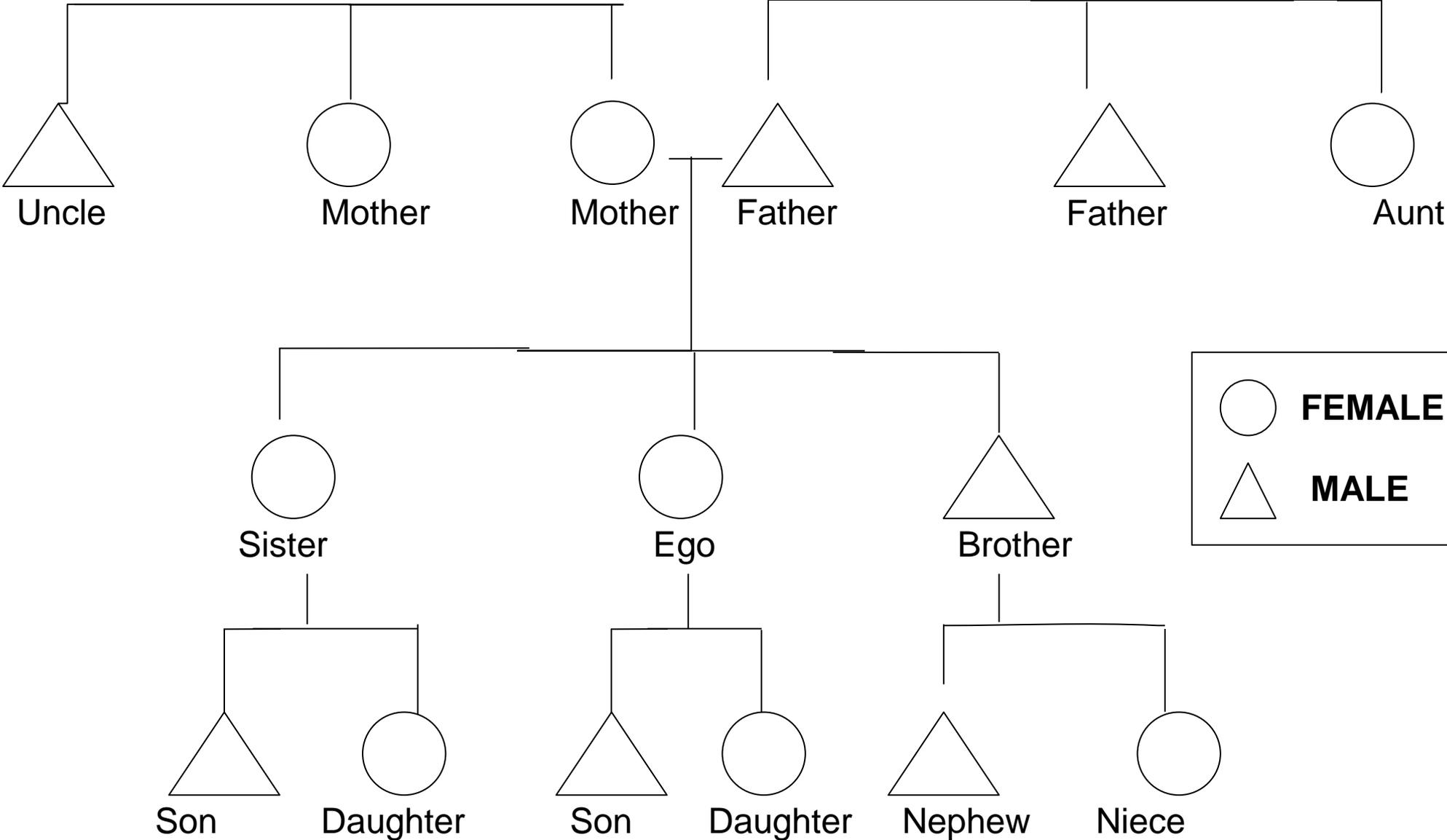
PNG PATRILINEAL PATTERN, MALE

EGO



PNG PATRILINEAL PATTERN, FEMALE

EGO



CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Motu society is that of the patrilineal type.

Motuanans keep their ties through the agnate; that is, family lineage is traced through the males, particularly the eldest male; from father to son. The eldest son (despite his birth-position in the family; so long as he is the first legal male child of the parents; particularly the father) is the birth-right owner and the legal claimant of the benefits and inheritance of his fathers before him. In all cases he is the ultimate decision-maker.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

In the Motu society, there are two important groups; the household and the *iduhu*. The household usually consists of all the brothers of the family; for instance, my father and his brothers; who live, eat, and sleep in the same house but have separate rooms or sleeping corners for each brother's family. The young and unmarried siblings also live in this household. This household can be termed as the family house.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

However, in cases where a brother builds his own house and moves in with his family, he can call upon one or two of his younger siblings, either single or married, to live with him.

The *iduhu*, on a bigger scale, is the residential area of a certain agnatic family in the village. The *iduhu* usually consists of a group of brothers of the same family lineage. Sisters of the family who marry out usually reside in their husbands *iduhu* but they always maintain close bonds with their fathers and brothers.

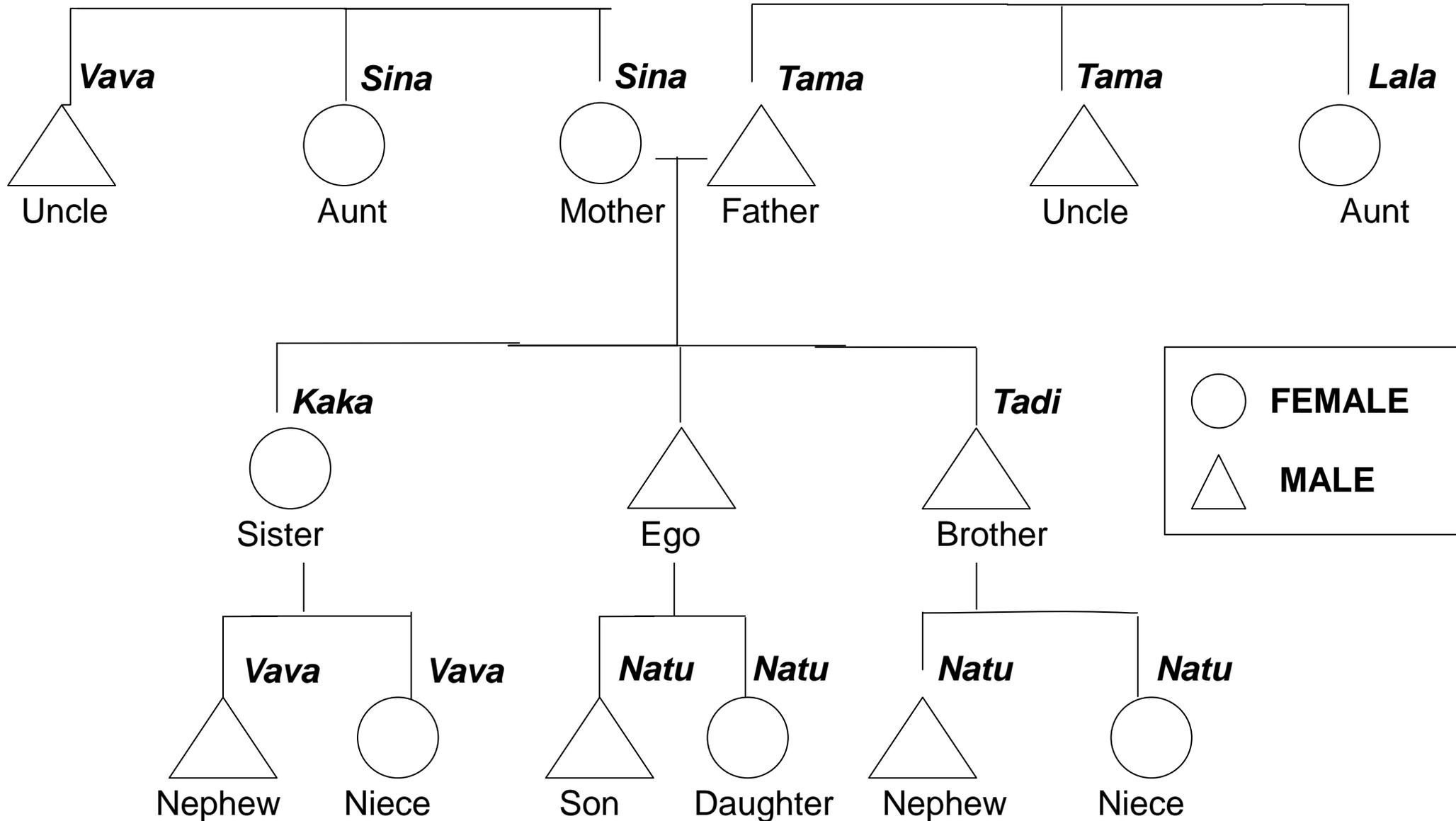
CULTURAL CONTEXT

The significance of the *iduhu* not only lies on beheading gardening, festive ceremonies, hunting, fishing, and sharing their games (within the *iduhu* and also to their sisters in the other *iduhu*) but goes even to the extent where the *iduhu* can and does interfere in the mortuary of its females (even though she was married to another *iduhu* or clan or even when the bride-price has been paid). The Motuans have a saying “*ai na turia beaguna*” (we are the owner of the bone or the bone belongs to us).

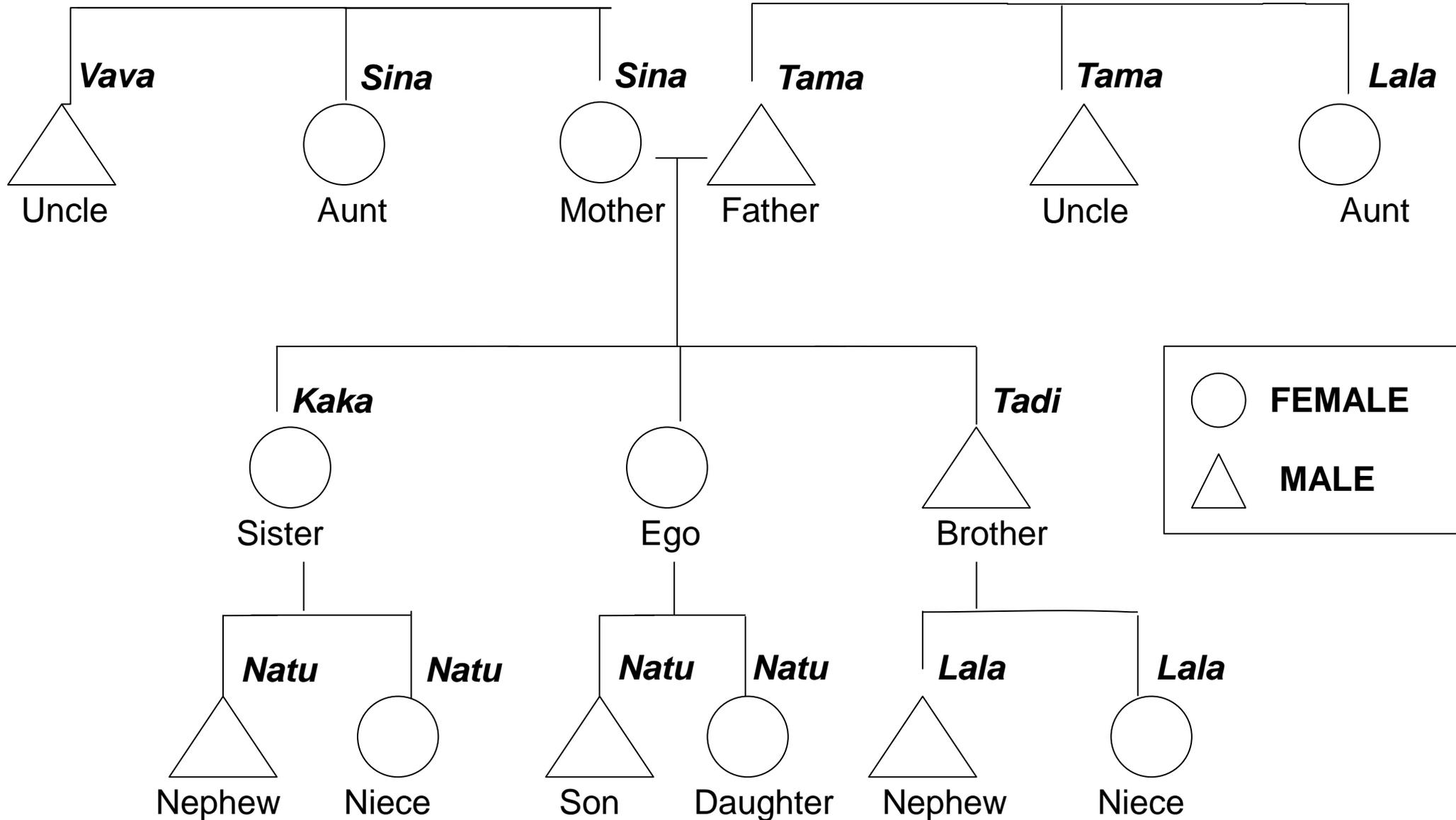
MOTU KINSHIP

As stated earlier, Motu kinship is that of the Hawaiian type. That is, the same kinterm is applied to all the relatives within a generation regardless of the collateral and lineal or matrilineal and patrilineal. That is, the Motu kinship terminology distinguishes one's own generation by age, or gender and only one term to all cognates of the grandparents' generation and grandchildren's generation.

MOTU KIN TERMS, MALE EGO



MOTU KIN TERMS, FEMALE EGO



THE KIN TERM “TAIHU”

While most kinship systems have words for common kin relations like father, mother, brother and sister, the Motu vocabulary and kinship system does not have the word for 'brother' or 'sister' alone. Thus the alternative of such is the kin term “taihu”. The term “taihu” is the only term in Motu that is used to refer to the opposite sibling, that is, brother to sister or sister to brother. “Taihu” is used only in one's generation. The term “taihu” is reciprocal of what the Hawaiians would call “kaikuane” and “kaikuahine”, or “brother” and “sister” in English.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the unusual gap in the kin terms of Motu for 'brother' or 'sister' is filled by the kin term “taihu”. Hence it can be deemed 'unnecessary' in the Motu vocabulary to have separate words for 'brother' and 'sister,' and Motu kinship has proven so. Motu kinship does not distinguish much with gender thus having separate words for brother and sister is not so important but the word “taihu” can be used only when necessary, particularly when trying to clarify to the third part.

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