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ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q1(c)

Lineage and Clan

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Anthropology GS 1 · 10 marks · Kinship

2.5 Kinship: Consanguinity and Affinity; Principles and types of descent (Unilineal, Double, Bilateral, Ambilineal); Forms of descent groups (lineage, clan, phratry, moiety and kindred); Kinship terminology (descriptive and classificatory); Descent, Filiation and Complimentary Filiation; Descent and Alliance.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on Lineage and **Clan**
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Lineage members can show genealogical links to an ancestor.

Clan members share a putative ancestor and often a totem.

Lineages nest inside clans in many segmentary systems.

Nuer feud and fusion made the distinction famous.

Both groups are commonly exogamous.

Introduction

Lineage and **clan** are descent groups. They differ by whether members can trace the actual links to an ancestor.

Body

Lineage

- A **lineage** is a unilineal group of people who demonstrate descent from a known ancestor.
- **Evans-Pritchard's** Nuer **minimal** and **maximal** lineages segment in feud and fusion.
- Property, blood compensation, and worship often sit on the lineage.

Clan

- A **clan** is a unilineal group that only stipulates a common ancestor, often totemic or mythical.
- Several lineages nest inside a **clan**, as among many Indian Scheduled Tribes and Scottish usage in textbooks.
- **Fortes** on Tallensi and **Middleton and Tait** on segmentary systems used this nesting.

Teaching contrast

- **Lineage:** demonstrated. **Clan:** putative. Both may be exogamous.

Flow diagram

Unilineal descent -> Lineage demonstrated

Unilineal descent -> Clan stipulated

Lineage demonstrated -> Nuer segments

Clan stipulated -> Totem ancestor

Conclusion

A lineage proves the pedigree. A **clan** claims a distant ancestor. Nuer segmentation is the type case for how the two nest in politics.

Facts & figures

Evans-Pritchard

The Nuer: lineage segmentation as the political order.

Fortes

Tallensi descent groups; lineage as a jural corporation.

Clan

Stipulated descent; the apical ancestor may be animal or culture hero.

Exogamy

Marriage out of clan or lineage is a frequent rule, not a universal one.

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