

# Matrilineality

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The term matrilineal descent (or uxorial descent, or matrilineality, or matrilineage) refers to a system of tracing family ties, inheritance and succession only through female ancestors in the family. Despite of its being quite uncommon, this type of social organization exists in many world's cultures and regions, and practically can be put to the following: "...relatedness through females is treated as culturally more significant than relatedness through males" (Holden, Sear & Mace, 2003).

Therefore, according to the system of matrilineality, an individual is supposed to belong to the same descent social group as his/her female ancestors (mother, grandmother, etc.). This concept is contrary to more widespread and popular social system of patrilineal descent, in which a person belongs to his/her father lineage. Patrilineal descent is a prevailing concept; nevertheless, matrilineality can have more common sense, because it is always easier to identify a person's mother than his/her father.

The term matrilineality is used both in sociology and anthropology, because historically such powerful cultures and civilizations like Ancient Egypt, Indo-European, Slavic, Chinese, Japanese, Middle Asian cultures, including the Minangkabau and many others, could rise and develop due to matrilineal customs and the power of their determined and clever Queens, Princesses or other female rulers. Strong elements of matrilineality are preserved in some contemporary cultures and religions, in particular, in Orthodox Judaism, which states that a person must be a child of a Jewish mother in order to be considered a member of this religious group.

## **References:**

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