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Specifying the common features of the individual cases. Such patterns we think of as customs: stereotyped forms of behavior that are required and correct. Some of us may choose to emphasize the *moral* character of customs (and thus the possibility of eliciting them directly from informants) rather than their *stereotyped* character, but in either case we feel that the two are connected. We then construct a system composed of such formal features, and characterize the whole system as one “with” dowry, or “with” cross-cousin marriage, or “with” ambilocal residence.

This kind of morphological concept of custom as the minimal element of form has been fundamental to our thinking because it serves such a useful purpose. It allows us to aggregate individual cases into a macrosystem and to maintain the connection between the two levels. We avoid the difficulties of some of the other social sciences of using different kinds of concepts for the description of the microunit and the macroaggregate: a man “gives” a dowry and a society “has” dowry. A custom has morphological characteristics that are like those of an individual item of behavior, and on both levels we can use the same descriptive and characterizing terms. And so we can observe people practicing the very culture that we abstract, whereas nobody practices socioeconomic class or gross national income.