



This photograph shows the preparations for the rebuilding of a house in 2006 in a Zafimaniry village in Madagascar. The Zafimaniry exemplify what Lévi-Strauss has called "house based societies" since it is the material house, often richly decorated, which symbolically represents the nub of the continuation of life through progeny. Every stage involves the ancestors and the man on the left is invoking them in order to bless the future generations at every stage. (see Bloch in [The Anthropology of Landscape](#). eds. Hirsch and Carsten).

The existence of house based societies shows the limitations of an approach that seeks to understand the representations of kinship cross-culturally, as revealed in inferences that can be studied experimentally, without also taking into account the relative prominence and placing of kinship concepts in different cultures. In house based societies the genealogical aspect of kinship cannot be understood unless we also take into account the fact that it is relatively subordinated and that talk about relatedness evokes, above all, the image of the material structure of the house, the villages in which these are located and the people it contains involved in practical domestic activities.