Introduction

The Initiative

Recently I brought out a book on about forty different societies of which the respective constitutions were determined by kinship as conceived by real people (Pfeffer 2016). The work was based upon outstanding anthropological monographs of the English-speaking world and showed that these social systems displayed a rather limited number of formal variations. It was thus meant to indicate how *anthropos*, irrespective of the given particular history, had tested and refined a relatively small number of styles to conceive and organize society, i.e. institutional patterns quite different from those of the Weberian legal-bureaucratic mode that had been disseminated across the globe, nowadays overshadowing all others. Thereafter, on noticing that Lewis Henry Morgan's first major comparative and theoretical work had been completed about 150 years ago, I realized that ever since this outstanding achievement, the additional theoretical insights into the subject had not really been overwhelming compared to Morgan's giant step in the 1860s. The time seemed to have come to reassess specific aspects of this achievement. For the readers, such a venture may require certain clarifications that can be seen as a major outcome of anthropological efforts since this beginning in the nineteenth century.

Clarifications

Kinship is not 'kinship'. The former, for better or worse, is the basic tie connecting a person's family members and perhaps more distant relatives, as long as they are identified as kin and understood to share some of the person's ancestors. By contrast, 'kinship' stands for the structure of many societies that used to preoccupy sociocultural anthropology, since they were known as anarchic or else as peasant societies.

Kinship terms are labels to address or to refer to kin. The latter are specific persons and as such are the smallest units of our species. They

are *Ego*'s kin, with the position of *Ego* standing for the speaker articulating the terms. A single kin is known to have resulted from physical activities, i.e. procreation and birth, performed by the common parents or more distant forebears that these kin share with *Ego*. According to this definition, kinship results from acts of nature, though in very rare cases, natural actors may be substituted by official institutions executing formal measures of individual adoption.

'Kinship' terms, on the other hand, are – irrespective of genealogical links – labels of sociocultural categories providing public order for numerous past and present societies across the globe. *Ego* does *not* simply apply these terms in order to designate a limited number of individuals naturally related to him or her; rather, their application allocates a public status to each person involved in this process. Accordingly, addresses and references provide essential social orientation to members of the given anarchic or peasant community. Such generalized applications of 'kinship' terms always follow a specific pattern of the social categories that appears to result from arbitrary principles of classification. Because of such apparent arbitrariness, the pattern is an object of sociocultural research. No known human actors are understood to have introduced these structures of 'kinship' terms. The categories and their variant pattern result from a given classification. Morgan recognized and explained this difference between kinship and 'kinship', though he did not use my phrases and arguments in his writings. In his own words, he also pointed out that kinship was *not* a relevant subject of scholarly preoccupation, whereas 'kinship' would answer basic questions on the sociocultural existence of *anthropos.*

After his ethnographic book on the Iroquois of New York State (1901 [1851]), Morgan compared the relationship terminologies of many Native North American peoples with each other and with European as well as Middle Eastern nomenclatures. As has been frequently described, he then continued the same kind of comparative inquiries by sending out questionnaires to residents of other continents, before finally bringing out the results of this research on *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1871) in his scholarly *magnum opus*.

Some years later, Morgan tried to describe and distinguish several 'periods' of human evolution. The focus of these discussions were two 'plans of government', the earlier one 'founded on persons and gentilism' (*societas*) and the later one 'founded on territory and property' (*civitas*) as elaborated initially in Part I of his second and more popular work on *Ancient Society* (1877). In his Part II, he offered for comparison an elaborate account of the stateless 'gentile organization' governing the Iroquois. Morgan's contemporaries and numerous later anthropolo-

gists as well as Marxist thinkers intensely and controversially debated his findings in several major contributions. In all quarters, he is considered to be a founding figure of the discipline.

A return to Morgan's comparisons is the primary objective of my book. It will also offer, in the course of basically new theoretical assessments and arguments, elaborate references to the social structure of the many millions of contemporary Indigenous people inhabiting the vast Highlands of Middle India between the River Ganges and, further south, the Godavara, the Aravalli Hills in the west, and those approaching the Bay of Bengal in the east. These ethnographic passages are mostly based upon my personal fieldwork. Almost every year between 1980 and 2002, I had been able to spend several months in this culture area.

To understand the general context of Morgan's comparisons, Chapter 1 will recall his political activism against the ongoing 'removal' of the Native North American peoples, his ethnographic research and the theoretical core of the refined twists in his discovery of the distinction between 'descriptive' and 'classificatory' terminologies. The account will greatly depend upon Thomas R. Trautmann's seminal work (1987), but will also argue with some of Morgan's most important critics, notably with the towering figure of Alfred Kroeber (1909), who had probably executed the major blow against the reputation of *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family.*

Discussions

In order to cope with the different theoretical points of the critics as well as my own divergences from Morgan, the technical prerequisites of my later analyses will have to be understood. Accordingly, Chapter 2 will present an overview and a critical explanation of the analytical tools applied in the subsequent dissections of terminologies. The technical limits of these instruments will also be indicated. At the end of this chapter, I will also add an explanation as to why the well-known 'terminology types', such as 'Iroquois' or 'Hawaiian', which are usually taught in undergraduate seminars, should be removed altogether from the anthropological syllabus.

Chapters 3–5 will present formal analyses of relationship terminologies that have either been collected and studied by Morgan's fieldwork in North America (Seneca and Omaha) or by my own ethnographic endeavours in India, though the Omaha data are taken from the corrected list of Robert H. Barnes (1984). After subjecting them to minute

inspection, I will contend that these systems must be understood as containing the basic constitutional principles of their respective societies. In other words, these relationship terminologies carry a very different meaning compared to the descriptions of concrete individual kin ties by European nomenclatures. It is indisputable that Morgan had understood and elaborated this critical difference, but the results of my analyses, though praising his discovery, will radically depart from his findings because they take into account the classificatory principle of affinity that he, like most of his successors, failed to conceive at all.

Chapter 3 'revisits' the Seneca terminology that had been more familiar to Morgan than any other and had probably instigated his comparisons to become his primary object of demonstration in *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity*. My examinations begin by juxtaposing the idea of a 'kinship terminology', as defined by the eminent analyst Floyd G. Lounsbury (1964b), with that of a 'relationship terminology' in the understanding of the methodological masterpiece written by Alan Barnard and Anthony Good (1984). After a critical discussion of Lounsbury's findings and Morgan's misunderstandings, the final result will propose that the Seneca system as a whole must be viewed as an affinal order of the symmetric kind, albeit one *proscribing* the repetition of intermarriage. Affinity will be the key concept of this book. It is thus advisable for readers to recall the following distinction:

> There are two kinds of marriage. The first results from the whims of two persons acting as private individuals; the second is a systematically organized affair which forms part of a series of contractual obligations between two social groups. (Leach 1961: 57)

When mentioning 'affinity', this book will refer to the second kind of marriage system. Thus, the term is best understood as 'marriageablity', a concept that might have been well known in past periods of European history, but is hardly intelligible to modern Western individuals. Affinal relationships are collective ones that allow marriage ties, whereas, for whatsoever reason, consanguineal relationships categorically rule these out.

Rather surprisingly, Chapter 4, which contains my second formal analysis examining the Omaha terminology, also concludes that this system is an affinal order of the symmetric kind, again *proscribing* continued ties to imply a multiplicity of different marriage alliances. The study depends upon the archival work and the publications of Barnes (e.g. Barnes 1984), though only I can be held responsible for the results. It also supports Barnes' rejection of any general 'Omaha type' of worldwide distribution and is only concerned with the empirical Prairie

people known as the Omaha. Their particular system of skewing had – mistakenly I suggest – persuaded many other authors to conceive the terminology as resulting from the impact of given patrilineal descent groups. 'Skewing' in the Omaha case means that a good number, but not all, relationship terms contain equations that ignore generational boundaries. For example, I refer to my *wife's sister* using the same term I apply to my *wife's brother's daughter*.

The third formal analytical exercise of this kind in Chapter 5 deals with the terminological data I have collected among the Kharia in Highland Middle India (HMI). It also arrives at the same conclusion. Again, symmetric affinal exchanges must not be repeated in subsequent generations. Accordingly, by three very obviously different terminological constructions, Seneca, Omaha, and Kharia systems respectively imply the same imperative, i.e. the general spreading of intensive social relationships through the constant *variations* of ties involving symmetric marriage. As in the earlier analyses, I interrelate all Kharia relationship terms within a single matrix to obtain this concentrated 'message'. To my knowledge, no other HMI terminology has so far been unified in this manner.[1] However, the central point in this chapter proposes that *all* HMI systems contain the same semantic pattern irrespective of the particular tongue belonging to any one of the three inclusive language families of the culture area, i.e. Dravidian, Indo-European and Munda. I come to this conclusion on the basis of the published ethnographic material and after having personally visited some thirty different Indigenous communities in the provinces of Odisha and Jharkhand. Some minor deviations in several languages will also be mentioned.

After these rather dry analyses, Chapter 6 is again concerned with the history of anthropology to debate David M. Schneider's general critique of anthropological kinship studies. Schneider's rejection is articulated in several contributions culminating in his statement that '"kinship" … is a non-subject, since it does not exist in any culture known to man' (1972: 59). Following Schneider's course, Janet Carsten (2000) has furthermore developed a reformed approach named 'New Kinship' that is equally critical of any kind of formal analysis. Both of these authors had conducted their ethnographic fieldwork among people applying what Morgan had defined as a 'Malayan' relationship terminology. In view of these circumstances, Chapter 6 will, in adducing data supplied by David Banks (1974), introduce the specific implications of such a system and relate these to Schneider's and Carsten's aversion to Morgan's legacy.

Chapter 7 will also discuss the history of anthropology when taking up Morgan's proposals on social evolution, or the 'progress of mankind,

from the bottom of the scale', as he initially wrote in the Table of Contents of *Ancient Society*. In this venture, he placed the Indigenous Australians 'near the bottom of the scale' (1877: 317). In view of this particular legacy, I will try to point out the major differences between Morgan's scheme and refined later concepts developed by, among others, Morton H. Fried and Marshall D. Sahlins that became popular during the early period of the Cold War. The endeavour was to compare the particular features of basically different institutional, technological and ideological conditions of individualistic mobile hunter-gatherers with those of settled anarchic societies, or others of a peasantry embedded in a centralized state. The substantively different degree of complexity marking these societal forms implies that the notions and content of the economy, the social order, and the worldview must vary considerably so that the respective basic ideas on kinship, marriage and gender, or those on power or religion must be understood within the given evolutionary context. These three domains of the social, the economic and the power relations will always be closely interrelated. Since the Australian aborigines are usually classified as hunter-gatherers due to the analytic priority Western scholars tend to give to the economy, Chapter 7 tries to show that their supposed anomaly, i.e. the highly complex worldview and social structure compared to their simple technology, on the contrary fits into the general pattern, once the catastrophe of the European invasion and occupation is taken into account that had led to the extreme decline of the Indigenous population and also to the aborigines' loss of the most fertile regions of the southern continent.

A reformed evolutionism is the frame of reference for Chapter 8, which will compare the 'gentile organization', or the anarchic public order observed in the Indigenous societies of Highland Middle India. Since I have mostly worked in Odisha and Jharkhand, I will confine myself to these eastern provinces when describing eight different empirical 'complexes' of usually interspersed local societies and their members' respective notions of 'tribal' federations, 'tribes', moieties and phratries, as well as clans, subclans and local descent groups (LDGs). However, my order of presenting these notions is misleading and, in fact, the opposite one is a better reflection of reality, but Western minds find it very difficult to comprehend such 'bottom-up' priorities. In fact, step by step the more inclusive of these enumerated entities lose in empirical relevance. I follow Sahlins (1968a: 15) in insisting that the household is the organizational navel in these societies without rulers and ruled, followed in importance by the larger family that may or may not coincide with a subgroup operating as a halfway house to the fairly influential LDG. As I describe them, all of these empirical

phenomena display a number of variations with regard to territorial or descent-related associations or to marriage rules. Some local communities express a clear preference for cross-cousin marriage, i.e. repetitive alliances, while an equally large part of the population is horrified by this idea. In both cases, it should be understood that networking in marriage matters is a major and comprehensive social preoccupation.

Given these priorities, it is clear that Chapter 9 on bridewealth and gender touches upon highly relevant interactional features of these societies; it will also, in the light of Morgan's suggestions, include observations on private property and on the sacrificial rituals that are also discussed in Chapter 8. The latter go together with these major prestations. My data on bridewealth will depend heavily upon the comprehensive and long-term research of Roland Hardenberg (2018) among the Dongria Kond. In a narrative style, I will also recall my eyewitness experiences of confrontations and marriage negotiations among the Kuttia Kond. These will be included because I am not at all sure to what extent earlier research in the culture area, or in India as a whole, has taken notice of the basic institution represented by bridewealth as a 'circulating fund'. The latter concept has been adopted from Jack Goody's Africanist studies (1973), which have greatly enriched the general debate. It points to the rather different gender relations in HMI when compared to the well-known ones in mainstream India characterized by the 'conjugal fund' of the dowry system. These alternative social values will also be discussed in reference to institutionalized Indigenous youth dormitories allowing and encouraging social interaction of a specific kind that is confined to the domain of unmarried juniors.

Considering that Morgan's life and work had been determined by his political struggle for the cause of Native Americans, Chapter 10 recalls many of my personal observations concerning the far-reaching and multiple social pressures experienced by the HMI population. I will describe lowland land-grabbers and also public or private industrial enterprises that have devastated the hills, and will add observations on the problematic forms of modern healthcare and educational institutions, or the guerrilla movement ('Naxalites') of mainstream Indians taking advantage of the absence of state institutions in the area to spread their 'revolutionary' message through militant action. Some basic insights will also juxtapose the nature of HMI religion with that of the lowlands and will indicate the rather robust manner in which governmental institutions propagate the established rituals of castes and temples. By contrast, highlanders at times continue to gather in crowds for the sake of Maussian 'total social facts', such as the collective

secondary funeral I could repeatedly observe and then analyse (Pfeffer 2001, 2016: 301f.) in extremely productive discussions with Peter Berger (2010, 2015).

Before concluding with results 'for the record', this book will thus present three chapters (Chapters 1, 6 and 7) on the history of anthropology, four others (Chapters 2–5) on formal analysis, and the final three (Chapters 8–10) on major empirical features observed in contemporary Indigenous societies of HMI.

To put it in a nutshell, I will follow and criticize Morgan's comparisons when trying to analyse the structures of two Native North American and all HMI relationship terminologies in order to demonstrate that their pattern emphasizes symmetric affinal exchanges between seniors along with those between juniors and that, at the same time, it implies intense social contacts to connect multiple rather than only two 'sides'.

This pattern may be viewed as the abstraction of basic social values that exclude 'top-down' and stand for 'bottom-up' relationships. It is observed in the many populous Indigenous societies of Highland Middle India. These contemporaries are free from 'the probability that certain specific commands will be obeyed by a given group of persons'.[2] Large or small, they exist without rulers and ruled. In the tradition of Morgan, political commitment for endangered minorities is taken up with the same intensity as has been applied in the other discussions on formal and empirical features of their societies, i.e. the treasures representing important markers of creativity in the evolution of *anthropos*.

Notes

1. Another kind of such a systematic unification of *all* relationship terms in a language has been presented by the brilliant Jesuit missionary John Deeney (1975: 128–29) for the terminology of the Ho.
2. '[D]ie Chance … für spezifische … Befehle in einer angebbaren Gruppe von Menschen Gehorsam zu finden' (Weber 1956: 157).