Social Anthropology Paper SAN 2

Anthropology and Kinship
Dr. Perveez Mody & Others

2015-’16
Michaelmas Weeks 1-8 Wednesdays, 9-10am, Mill Lane Lecture Room 1

Lectures

1) P. Mody: Lewis Henry Morgan, Schneider and the critique of kinship

2) P. Mody: Structural-functionalism, alliance theory, feminist critiques

3) P. Mody: Persons

4) P. Mody: Fixing and mixing kinship: boundaries, bodies, friendship

5) H. Diemberger: The Substances of Kinship: exploring Tibetan and Mongolian notions of flesh-and-bone

6) H. Diemberger: Transformations in the study of kinship

7) P. Filippucci: The Time of Kinship: structure, memory and history

8) P. Filippucci: Space, Place and Kinship

General texts on kinship

These will help in defining terms and summarising theoretical issues in the study of kinship:

David M Schneider, 1984 A critique of the study of kinship
Alan Barnard & Anthony Good, 1984 Research practices in the study of kinship
Ladislav Holy, 1996 Anthropological perspectives on kinship
Robert J Parkin, 1997 Kinship: an introduction to the basic concepts
Janet Carsten, 2004 After kinship

Readers on kinship

The following recent collections provide overviews of anthropological approaches to kinship.


**Ethnographies**

In addition to the weekly lectures, students are strongly advised to read from the following ethnographies that focus on kinship:

Rita Astuti, 1995 *People of the sea: identity and descent among the Vezo of Madagascar*
Cecilia Busby, 2000 *The performance of gender: an anthropology of everyday life in a south Indian fishing community*
JK Campbell, 1964 *Honour, family and patronage: a study of institutions and moral values in a Greek mountain community*
Janet Carsten, 1997 *The heat of the hearth: the process of kinship in a Malay fishing community*
E Valentine Daniel, 1984 *Fluid signs: being a person the Tamil way*
Jeanette Edwards, 2000 *Born and bred: idioms of kinship and new reproductive technologies in England*
EE Evans-Pritchard, 1951 *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer*
Peter Gow, 1991 *Of mixed blood: kinship and history in Peruvian Amazonia*
Karin Kapadia, 1995 *Siva & her sisters: gender, caste, and class in rural South India*
Maya Mayblin, 2010 *Gender, Catholicism, and morality in Brazil: virtuous husbands, powerful wives*
Jonathan Parry, 1979 *Caste and kinship in Kangra*
David M Schneider 1980 (2nd edition.) *American kinship: a cultural account*
Marilyn Strathern, 1992 *After nature: English kinship in the late twentieth century*
Yunxiang Yan, 2003 *Private life under socialism: love, intimacy and family change in a Chinese village 1949-1999*
Sylvia Junko Yanagisako, 2002 *Producing culture and capital: family firms in Italy*

**Reading List**

Lecture 1

**Lewis Henry Morgan, Schneider and the critique of kinship**
Dr. Perveez Mody

Lewis Henry Morgan is one of the most overlooked anthropological forefathers, who is commonly dismissed for his apparent evolutionism (made famous by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*). Nevertheless, Morgan was a pioneer, both for anthropology and especially for the study of kinship. His theories of “blood” turn out to be rather more complex than assumed and particularly post-Schneider, misunderstood. And for all his unfashionable ethnocentricism, he dedicated his book *League of the Iroquois* (1851) to Hasanoanda (aka Ely S. Parker), a Seneca Indian who was his chief informant and who is...
credited with jointly having researched the book. By the same measure by which Morgan has been caricatured by successive generations of anthropologists, Schneider has been valorised to the extent to which he is paid homage, with little critique. This lecture challenges both the dispatch of “kinship” as a non-subject (Schneider) or indeed, as a newly invented one.

Morgan 1851 *League of the Iroquois* or Ho-de-no-sau-nee (See especially the Preface; Book I Chapter IV starting “Division into Tribes.”)


Lecture 2
Structural-functionalism, alliance theory, feminist anthropology
Dr. Perveez Mody

This lecture seeks to ask what kinship is really about. It might sound ridiculously obvious, but nevertheless it is worth considering what anthropologists were trying to capture in their study of kinship. What makes groups? What makes a village? What makes a family hold together? It also looks at these questions from the perspective of last week’s lecture: Is “biology one thing, kinship another”? How did structural-functionalists think about descent and how was this different from kinship? What was the place of marriage and reciprocity in structuralist models of kinship? How did feminist anthropologists respond to the complexities of kinship as it had been crafted thus far, gendered roles and the divisions between the public/private?


Domains: atom of kinship – dyadic relations; political organization – lineage relations
Who are parents? Developmental cycle – households


Overing, J 1973. 'Endogamy and the marriage alliance: a note on continuity in kindred-based groups', Man, 8(4): 555-570

Stephen Hugh Jones 1979. The Palm and the Pleiades: initiation and cosmology in
Lecture 3
Persons
Dr. Perveez Mody

In this lecture, we focus on the question of who persons are and why notions of personhood are deeply implicated in the ways kinship is both thought about and enacted. We consider how they point to the importance of recognition, of knowledge, and of perspective, for an understanding of personhood.

*Marcel Mauss “The Category of the Person”. In Carrithers, et al. eds. 1985. The category of the person: anthropology, philosophy, history. CUP.


* Bodenhorn & Vom Bruck 2006. Introduction. Anthropology of Names and Naming. CUP. NB, chapters by Andre Iteanu; Bodenhorn; C Humphrey; Susan Benson


**Lecture 4**

*Fixing and mixing kinship: boundaries, bodies, friendship*

Dr. Perveez Mody


Lecture 5

The Substances of Kinship: exploring Tibetan and Mongolian notions of flesh-and-bone

Dr. Hildegaard Diemberger

This lecture explores some of the issues that emerge when we look at kinship comparatively. Why notions referring to the human body, bodily substances and human reproduction seem to be often highly significant in the conceptualization of kinship relations? Are kinship relations qualitatively different from other relations? We shall explore these questions in the light of concrete ethnographic cases. Looking at Tibetan and Mongolian kinship as specific cases of kinship conceptualized in terms of “flesh/blood and bone”-a system of notions that is widespread all over Asia, we will focus on the relationship between kinship and the way that the human body is thought of, as well as on how children are attributed to their parents and to kin-groups by using terms referring to their bodily substances, i.e. the bones inherited from the father that link the child to its patrilateral kin group and the flesh or blood inherited from the mother that links the child to its matrilateral kin group. In this lecture we will also compare and contrast the idiom of “blood” as used in Tibetan “flesh/blood” and “bone” kinship and the idiom of “blood” used in Euro-American kinship as described by David Schneider. Finally we look at some of the ways in which Tibetan forms of marriage challenge common assumptions about parenthood.

Readings


Lecture 6
Transformations in the study of kinship
Dr. Hildegaard Diemberger

Building on the ethnography of the previous lecture and looking closely at Godelier’s study of kinship and the body among the Baruya of Papua New Guinea, this lecture addresses a wider anthropological debate on the nature of kinship. David Schneider radical critique of kinship as a subject of anthropological study prompted a wide range of responses, some building on his approach others refuting it sharply. In this lecture we are going to look at Carsten’s suggestion that the notion of ‘kinship’ could be substituted with that of ‘relatedness’ as a way of overcoming the limitation of ‘kinship’ understood as a discrete domain and the assumption that ties deriving from procreation exert an overriding moral force. We will also look at the way in which other anthropologists have sought to re-think ‘kinship’ against the background of debates on the nature of kinship and relatedness: from Godelier’s “metamorphoses of kinship” to Marshall Sahlin’s “mutuality of being” as defining element in kinship relations.

Bloch, M (2013) “What kind of ‘is’ is Sahlins’ ‘is’?” review of M. Sahlins’ What Kinship is – and is not in Hau http://www.haujournal.org/index.php/hau/article/view/hau3.2.014

Bodenhorn, B (2000) “‘He used to be my relative’: exploring the bases of relatedness among Inupiat of northern Alaska” in J. Carsten (ed.) Cultures of Relatedness, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press


Lecture 7
Kinship Time & Space & Lecture 8 - Space, Place and Kinship
Dr P. Filippucci

These two lectures consider the role of time and of space in forming the ‘substance’ of kinship. Lecture 7, ‘The Time of Kinship: structure, memory and history’ moves from classic accounts that consider kinship as abstract and timeless ‘structure’ to showing that time is an inherent dimension of kinship relations, personhood and sentiment cross-culturally. The example of war is then used to consider how historical events shape and infuse kinship through the symbolic and moral challenges that they pose to the transmission and reproduction of identities, persons and relations. Lecture 8, ‘Space, Place and Kinship’ considers how anthropologists have modelled the relationship between kinship and space, critically examining the notions of ‘household’ and ‘house’ in relation to ‘family’ and ‘kinship’, and discussing the role and power of space and place in the making of kinned persons and relations cross-culturally as a principle of both unity and division.

Selected readings:
J. Carsten 2000 "Knowing where you’ve come from": ruptures and continuities of time and kinship in narratives of adoption reunions. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute N.S. 6: 687-703
S. Feuchtwang 2005 'Mythical moments in national and other family histories.' History Workshop Journal 59: 179-193
J. Carsten and S. Hugh-Jones (eds.) 1995 About the Howe Cambridge: CUP
M. Ferme, 2001 The Underneath of Things Berkeley: University of California Press (ch. 4)

Potential Supervision Questions:

1) The study of kinship both illuminates and is illuminated by the study of non-kin relations. Discuss.

2) What, if anything at all, is added to our understanding of kinship by calling it a cultural system? OR Do you agree with Schneider that there is no such thing as kinship?

3) Has the term “relatedness” simply contracted, expanded or supplanted kinship?
4) Why did Strathern find it necessary to introduce the concept of ‘dividual’ into a description of Melanesian kinship? OR ‘In English kinship, individuals reproduce individuals’ What does Strathern mean by such an assertion?

5) If kinship ensures the continuity of the person, what happens to it when historical events rupture that continuity?

6) The study of kinship is as much about rupture as it is about connection. Discuss.

7) Can kinship time and historical time be separated?

8) Drawing on either the notion of domains and/or the notion of the developmental cycle of domestic groups, evaluate some of the ways that post-Fortesian anthropologists have engaged with these models.

9) Why has the notion of the person attracted more analytical attention by anthropologists working in the field of kinship than in other anthropological arenas? OR, more simply, why has the concept of the person attracted so much anthropological attention?

10) ‘It’s all a matter of perspective.’ Explore this statement with reference to two anthropologists of your choice.