

## **Matrilineal Kinship**

Dr Jessica Johnson

Michaelmas 2015, Weeks 7 & 8, Thursdays 9am

### **Lecture 1: The “Matrilineal Puzzle”**

What is matrilineal kinship and where is it to be found? The first of these lectures begins with a discussion of what is meant by the term ‘matrilineal’, and goes on to consider the diversity of norms and practices that this category may contain. We will then look at the ways in which early observers in Africa, including Christian missionaries, colonial officials and anthropologists, understood (in many cases misunderstood) matrilineal norms of kinship. The so-called ‘matrilineal puzzle’ looms large in early efforts to get to grips with matrilineality, and we will ask what this puzzle entailed and why it was considered puzzling.

### **Lecture 2: Is Matrilineality Doomed?**

If matrilineality seems puzzling to many, it has also often been spoken about as in decline, or indeed ‘doomed’. The second lecture will ask whether we can reassess predictions of decline or assimilation to patrilineal norms in light of more recent ethnographic work. We will also ask why it might be important or illuminating for anthropologists working on seemingly unrelated topics to understand matrilineal kinship.

### **Reading List**

Apter, Andrew (2012) 'Matrilineal motives: kinship, witchcraft, and repatriation among Congolese refugees', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (1): 22-44.

Arnfred, Signe (2011) *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique: rethinking gender in Africa*. Woodbridge: James Currey.

\* Brantley, Cynthia (1997) 'Through Ngoni eyes: Margaret Read's matrilineal interpretations from Nyasaland', *Critique of Anthropology* 17 (2): 147-69.

Douglas, Mary (2001 [1969]) 'Is matrilineality doomed in Africa?' in M. Douglas and P. M. Kaberry (eds), *Man in Africa*. London: Routledge.

Hirschmann, David and Megan Vaughan. (1983) 'Food production and income generation in a matrilineal society: rural women in Zomba, Malawi', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10 (1): 86-9

Johnson, Jessica (2012) 'Life with HIV: "stigma" and hope in Malawi's era of ARVs', *Africa* 82 (4): 632-53.

Kishindo, Paul (2010) 'The marital immigrant. Land, and agriculture: a Malawian case study', *African Sociological Review* 14 (2): 89-97.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1969) *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.

Mair, Lucy P. (1951) 'Marriage and family in the Dedza District of Nyasaland', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 81 (1/2): 103-19.

Mitchell, J. Clyde (1956) *The Yao Village: a study in the social structure of a Malawian people*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Mohanty, Chandra T. (1988) 'Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial

discourses', *Feminist Review* 30: 61-88.

Moore, Henrietta L. and Megan Vaughan (1994) *Cutting Down Trees: gender, nutrition, and agricultural change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990*. London: James Currey.

Oppong, Christine (1974) *Marriage Among a Matrilineal Elite: a family study of Ghanaian senior civil servants*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Peletz, Michael (1988) *A Share of the Harvest*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

\* Peters, Pauline E. (1997) 'Introduction: revisiting the puzzle of matriliney in South-Central Africa', *Critique of Anthropology* 17 (2): 125-46.

Peters, Pauline E. (1997) 'Against the odds: matriliney, land and gender in the Shire Highlands of Malawi', *Critique of Anthropology* 17 (2): 189-210.

Peters, Pauline E., Peter A. Walker and Daimon Kambewa. (2008) 'Striving for normality in a time of AIDS in Malawi', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 46 (4): 659.

Poewe, Karla O. (1981) *Matrilineal Ideology: male-female dynamics in Luapula, Zambia*. London: Academic Press.

Read, Margaret (1942) 'Migrant Labour in Africa and its Effects on Tribal Life', *International Labour Review* 45 (6): 605-31.

Richards, Audrey I. (1950) 'Some types of family structure amongst the central Bantu' in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde (eds), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*. London: Oxford University Press.

Richards, Audrey I. (1982 [1956]) *Chisungu: a girl's initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia*. London: Routledge.

Schneider, David M. and Kathleen Gough (eds) (1961) *Matrilineal Kinship*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Vaughan, Megan (1983) 'Which family? Problems in the reconstruction of the history of the family as an economic and cultural unit', *The Journal of African History* 24 (2): 275-83.

Vaughan, Megan (1987) *The Story of an African Famine: gender and famine in twentieth-century Malawi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

White, Landeg (1987) *Magomero: portrait of an African village*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### **Possible Supervision Questions**

What is the 'matrilineal puzzle' and how puzzling is it?

Is matriliney doomed?

It is possible to argue that whether or not matrilineal norms of kinship prevail in a particular setting is irrelevant to the study of aspects of people's lives beyond their kinship relations. To what extent do ethnographic studies conducted in matrilineal contexts support such a claim?