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THE HOUSE THAT MORGAN BUILT

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L.H. Morgan's kinship work began and ended with the Iroquois longhouse, and the Iroquois kinship system that it shaped and by which it was shaped. Kinship became a house for anthropology, shaping and being shaped by the emerging discipline. Much of the house that Morgan built for anthropology still stands, including the last book, on houses and house-life, which seems to anticipate the current literature on houses and house-societies.

I continue in my belief that Morgan is "good to think," to use the memorable phrase of a recently-departed colleague. Lévi-Strauss thought so, and dedicated his big book of kinship to Morgan by way of honoring his pioneering work and the American school of anthropology that he founded and with which Lévi-Strauss was associated during the war years, "recalling that this school was especially great at a time when scientific precision and exact observation did not seem to him to be incompatible with a frankly theoretical mode of thought and a bold philosophical taste." (Lévi-Strauss 1969:xxvi) The compliment to American anthropology was at the same time an implied criticism of the Boasian refusal of theory and bold philosophical taste, which so bedeviled American anthropologists' relation to Morgan. Lévi-Strauss and many others have looked past the manifest evolutionism of Morgan's mature work and found therein resources for current research, not just the record of a past that is dead. This is especially true of Morgan's development of kinship as a subject matter for comparative study, the topic of the *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity*, the massive book published by the Smithsonian in 1871.

Lévi-Strauss, whose big book on kinship gave anthropology a huge presence beyond the discipline in his time, had a notable second act, the making of the concept of the house society, *maison*, which soon morphed into the study of the relation of houses and kinship and the "cultures of relatedness" approach to kinship at the hands of Janet Carsten and others (Lévi-Strauss 1982; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Carsten 2000). This development could likewise be profitably seen as a late fruit of Morgan's last work, namely his book, *Houses and House-life of the American Aborigines*, published in 1881. Here again, we need a generous reading of Morgan, and not a narrow one focused exclusively on his evolutionary schematizing, to find its living treasure.

The book Morgan published at the end of his career as America's first anthropologist began with the book that launched it, the *League of the Ho-de'-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois*, 1851. Morgan's project in that book was to grasp the constitution of the Iro-

quois; that is, he approached the Iroquois as a lawyer, and the encounter turned him into an anthropologist. He found that the Iroquois constitution was based on three things which had hitherto been poorly understood or not understood at all by previous writers on the Iroquois: the longhouse; the system of matrilineal clans; and the kinship terminology. Each of these had features that made them strange for a European-American, and yet logical in their own world: the fact that the longhouse contained not one but several couples and their children; the matrilineal descent of Iroquois clans; and the fact that in the kinship terminology of the Iroquois, the father's brother was equally a father and the mother's sister a mother, as Morgan put it. Puzzling out the strange logic of each, and the relation of each to the others, was the task which Morgan set himself, with the help of his friend Ely Parker, a Seneca Iroquois of Tonawanda, New York (to whom he dedicated his first book, the fruit of their joint labors, as he said) and the Parker family. The three topics led to wide-ranging comparative study that formed his subsequent books: *Systems* (1871), about kinship terminology, and *Ancient Society* (1877), in which clanship is brought to the fore. The *Houses* book (1881) had been twice deferred. Morgan had wanted to publish about houses and house-life in *Systems*, but the manuscript was overlong and it had to be cut out; only a vestige remains. The same happened with *Ancient Society*; indeed the *Houses* book is largely the section on the topic that Morgan had written up for *Ancient Society* and then had to cut out because of length. Morgan's last book was the fruition, after much delay, of his project for the comparative study of houses and house-life which he had been nursing ever since the publication of the first book, and which he considered an integral part of his great kinship project.

As Morgan tells us, the Iroquois call themselves the Ho-de'-no-sau-nee, or people of the longhouse. By Morgan's time the longhouse had given way to the individual family dwelling, but Ely Parker's mother gave Morgan her childhood memories of growing up in one (Morgan 1881), and his father made Morgan a model showing how it was constructed (Morgan 1851). The longhouse, among other things, housed the matrilineal clan segment, so that some of one's many mothers lived in it. The Iroquois nations comprised two sets of brother nations, the two sets related to one another as father and son. Onondaga, in the middle, was the council fire of the league, and Mohawk in the east and Seneca in the west were the two entrances of the longhouse (Morgan 1851). And so forth. Kinship and the longhouse suffused Iroquois social organization.

Once he came to understand the logic of the Iroquois longhouse and the society that had created it, Morgan regarded it as the key to understanding the physical forms and sociological causes of Indian homes throughout North and Central America. His comparative project had a polemical aspect from the start because he found that existing American and Spanish writing on Indian life had wrongly imposed European categories on Indian life—such concepts as kings, palaces, vassals, royal feasts and the like. Morgan believed that Indian domestic architecture followed from a "plan of life" that had its own integrity and that made the physical forms of domestic architecture intelligible. Morgan's project was partly to controvert outright errors in the writings on Indians; partly it was to give a new reading to the details of the written record of Indian life composed by Europeans, a reading that would bring out their true significance.

Morgan's conception of the Native American "plan of life" had five main elements: (1) the law of hospitality; (2) communism in living; (3) the ownership of lands in common; (4) the practice of having but one prepared meal each day—a dinner; and (5) their separation at meals, the men eating first and by themselves, and the women and children afterwards (1881:44-45). This plan was largely invisible to Euro-Americans, and was disappearing as Indian societies were being transformed into something more familiar to them. But the very transformation process made the Indians themselves acutely aware of the world that was being lost, and how it differed from the one that was being acquired; and as they learned English they gained capacity to translate from the one world to the other. Just to take one example: William Parker and his daughter Caroline, of Tonawanda, showed Morgan how the obligation of hospitality conflicted with the regular mealtimes of Euro-America. Parker, Ely's father, was a Seneca chief, with a farmstead and domestic animals, and a single-family dwelling; in other words, a post-longhouse mode of life. His wife had died, so he asked his daughter, who had an English education, to become housekeeper for him.

> The old man, referring to the ancient custom [of hospitality], requested his daughter to keep the usual food constantly prepared ready to offer to any person who entered their house, saying that he did not wish to see this custom of their forefathers laid aside. Their changed condition, and particularly the adoption of the regular meals of civilized society, for the time of which the visitor might reasonably be expected to wait, did not in his mind outweigh the sanctity of the custom (Morgan 1881:45-46).

> The guest was always presumed hungry and was fed the moment he arrived instead of waiting till mealtime; if he was not in fact hungry, he nevertheless ate a bit, and asked to set aside the rest for later. This simple contrast of domestic custom between native Americans and Euro-Americans had wide consequences, in Morgan's eyes; the law of hospitality "tended to the final equalization of subsistence" (1881:45), and accordingly the regime of property was also different: the "ownership of lands in common" rather than private property.

> Morgan's plan for anthropology tracked this conception of the Indian "plan of life;" the plan being to join ethnology of kinship and prehistoric archaeology for their mutual illumination, with ethnology of living societies explaining the logic of physical structures of past and present and archeology giving the ethnology an historical time-depth. One of his last articles reports on a field trip he took to the ruins of a pueblo on the Animas River of New Mexico, published in the annual report of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology (1880b), and another was "A study of the houses of the American aborigines, with suggestions for the exploration of the ruins in New Mexico, Arizona, the Valley of the San Juan, and in Yucatan and Central America" (1880a), published in the annual report of the Archaeological Institute of America. He had a huge influence on Adolph Bandelier, the pioneer archaeologist of the American southwest, Central America and the Incas (for which see their voluminous correspondence in White 1940), and on John Wesley Powell, founder and first director of the Bu-

reau of Ethnology, later the Bureau of American Ethnology, publisher of a series, bound in olive green covers, of invaluable ethnographies of North American peoples. Through them, Morgan's ideas about house societies entered the practice of archaeology and ethnology in America.

This brief account of Morgan's vision for anthropology and the place of comparative study of kinship in relation to built structures must suffice to suggest why one should read Houses and house-life or, if a shorter and juicier read is desired, "Montezuma's dinner" (Morgan 1876) in which Morgan eviscerates the Spanish chroniclers and the American historian Bancroft, with verve and with glee. I hasten on to the second topic of this paper, which is to describe the house that Morgan was building for anthropology, as he was illuminating the social and material structure of the Iroquois longhouse.

* * *

Anthropology the discipline can be thought of as a house society, a *société à maison*, of individuals brought together by relations of various kinds. The hard and soft parts of the house of anthropology would be, respectively, its institutional structure and its collective intellectual objects and problems.

As to the hard parts, the institutional structure, the disciplines are grounded in the university departments, which supply the salaries and reproduce themselves internally through hiring and impose group norms through the tenuring machinery. However, as we follow this thread back to its point of origin, departments grow smaller and finally disappear and we are left with the single appointment, or even a fragment of an appointment, representing the discipline in small, without the machinery. We cannot find the origins of disciplines within universities; we find them in the learned associations through which individual scholars were massed into communities around objects of study. In the associations, intellectual communities were formed and given a face-to-face reality, even if only at long intervals, perhaps once a year. It was here that scholars, most of them not teachers at universities and colleges—Morgan being an example–were collected and sorted into specialties by topics and methods of study. And it was here, not in universities, that research and original scholarship was being produced.

What is the relation of Morgan to the emergence of anthropology as a discipline? Andrew Dickson White was the single professor of modern history—that is, everything after the Greeks and Romans—at the University of Michigan in the mid-nineteenth century and then became the first president of Cornell in 1866 and the creator, therefore, of its intellectual partitioning into professorships, each one of them, at the beginning, the seed of a department-to-be. He offered a visiting professorship of anthropology to Morgan, which would have been part of a series of visiting professorships bringing leading scholars into the university as a way of infusing the results of the newest research (White to Morgan, Morgan Papers, Rochester University Library). This plan itself shows that new research was done outside the university and had to be brought into it by deliberate action as part of the formation of the disciplines. Had Morgan accepted White's offer, he would have been the first anthropologist in the country and perhaps the world; but he judged that he was too old to take on the teaching of undergraduates and declined.

Because research was injected into universities from without, and because universities were at first too small to sustain disciplinary departments, we have to look elsewhere to find the beginnings of anthropology and, indeed, the beginnings of the partitioning of the intellectual and institutional universe into disciplines. One place to look is the learned societies; another is the large, unitary umbrella organizations such as the British Association for the Advancement of Science and its American counterpart, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The latter deserves a close look.

Morgan was actively involved with the AAAS, specifically the section called "philology and ethnology," in which he presented some of his early papers (Trautmann 2008:108-109), and it was here that American anthropology found itself through Morgan's kinship work. At the end of his life, he was made president of the AAAS, and the anthropology section was born. These events responded to the international recognition Morgan's books, the Systems and Ancient society, had gotten, especially in England, and the parallel developments there. The comparative study of kinship afforded an object and a problem giving coherence and identity to a nascent community of specialist scholars of anthropology.

Being affiliated both with both anthropology and history, I inevitably think about the emergence of both disciplines as a linked pair. Mine is a Big Bang theory of their emergence. The bang in question was the failure, in about 1859, of the short, biblical chronology for human history and the sudden expansion of the timespan of human history. This event—the revolution in ethnological time (Trautmann 1992)—was like a shock of electrical current running through the primordial soup and rearranging its chemistry to produce life. What is so striking to me is that disciplinary history emerged from the turmoil caused by the time revolution with its biblical scale of time virtually unchanged, and left it to disciplinary anthropology, including archaeology, to fill the huge void of time, newly christened prehistory, that had suddenly opened up. Rather than following the subsequent history of kinship study—which is to say, the comparative analysis of kinship—and how it has grown, died and been resurrected, I want to speak to the substance of this field of study Morgan was the first to identify.

In a word, Morgan found an order of facts in the world that are widely-spread, that call for explanation, that require comparative study to do so, and that only anthropology is equipped to speak to. All the social sciences and life sciences have something to say about the family, but kinship, which is to say comparative kinship, and kinship terminology understood as a logically-integrated set, is the special province of anthropology, thanks to Morgan.

Let us return to Morgan's starting-point. The Iroquois father's brother is equally a father, and so forth. This "and so forth" indicates the more general phenomenon, to which Scheffler and Lounsbury gave the name of "same-sex sibling merging" (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971:114). Virtually by itself, same-sex sibling merging makes intelligible what seems strange about an Iroquois kinship terminology for English speakers. Where English speakers distinguish lineal and collateral kin, Iroquois distinguishes parallel and cross kin on the basis of the merger of same-sex siblings and keeping cross-sex siblings distinct. The dimension of what we call "crossness," moreover, pervades the

three medial generations, dividing them into categories of cross and parallel kin. The expected number of kin in these categories is (nearly) equal. For example, in my parent's generation, if the father's brother is a "father" and the mother's sister a "mother" in Iroquois, I will have nearly equal numbers of fathers, uncles, mothers and aunts (though not quite, because my father makes the "fathers" one larger than the expected number of "uncles", and the same for mothers and aunts).

Crossness is very widely spread in the world, especially in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Oceania and Australia, and is rare in the Middle East and Europe. Crossness has several variant forms; the two major ones, Dravidian and Iroquois, depending on whether it is or is not connected with a rule of cross-cousin marriage (Lounsbury 1964a; Trautmann 1982: 86-87; Tjon Sie Fat 1998; Viveiros de Castro 1992; see also Read 2010, Leaf and Read 2012 on the logical connection between cross-cousin marriage and terminologies with crossness). These facts tend to confirm Morgan's hunch that (to put it in my words) crossness is the hidden key to social systems outside of Europe. He believed also, and I increasingly think this has something in it, that crossness is a way to prevent relationships from getting lost by remoteness: "Differences in the degree of nearness are made to yield to the overmastering strength of the kindred tie" in terminologies with crossness (1871:472). In effect, in these terminologies all kin are one of two grades of distance from Ego, zero or one, parallel or cross, respectively, so that genealogically remote relationships can be prevented from getting lost.

The other strange but really-existing social fact Morgan saw was what we have come to call *skewing* or the merger of kin across generations, such that, to use Morgan's way of speaking, the uncle's son is equally an uncle, that is, MBS = MB. Here is what he says:

> I first discovered this deviation from the typical form while working out the system of the Kaws in Kansas in 1859. The Kaw chief from whom I obtained it, through a perfectly competent interpreter, insisted upon the verity of these relationships against all doubts and questionings; and when the work was done I found it proved itself through the correlative relationships. Afterwards in 1860, while at the Iowa reservation in Nebraska, I had an opportunity to test it fully, both in Iowa and Otoe, through White Cloud a native Iowa well versed in English. While discussing these relationships he pointed out a boy near us, and remarked that he was his uncle, and the son of his mother's brother who was also his uncle (Morgan 1871:179, n 1).

Crossness is widespread and readily intelligible, but Crow-Omaha skewing is obscure and the knottiest of problems. We can show that skewing builds upon crossness, however, even while skewing acts to obliterate surface expressions of crossness, and this is, itself, a capital fact. That being so, skewing is found where crossness is, and is absent where crossness is not. What is not obscure about it is that it is associated with unilineality in some way, and comes in patrilineal and matrilineal versions, called Omaha and Crow. There are at least four sub-varieties of each (Lounsbury 1964b). What makes this problem knotty is that there seem to be two quite different paths to Crow-Omaha, one via

Iroquois crossness and the prohibition of marriage with close unilineal groups, and the other via asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage as a unilineal restriction upon Dravidian crossness. They are as alike, and as different, as whales and fish, to use a metaphor of Lévi-Strauss (1965; Trautmann and Whiteley 2012).

As I say, crossness and skewing are facts in the world that only anthropology has found and has the tools to interpret (see, for example, Read 2007), if it will; and they remain in the world even if anthropology grows tired of them. This is the foundation of the house that Morgan built for us. It is a sturdy house, because it rests on solid ground.

The two leading tendencies of kinship study today are the "cultures of relatedness" stream, coming out of the "house society" idea, and formal analysis of kinship terminologies. As I have shown, both were present at the creation of the comparative study of kinship, in the work of Morgan. Formalism was the object of furious attack by Schneider, the effect of whose work was to clear a place for the other tendency. The challenge for us, today, is to not choose one to the exclusion of the other, but to integrate the two, as Morgan tried to do.

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