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## Authors

Dziebel, German  
Athila, Adriana  
Lea, Vanessa R.  
et al.

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# COMMENTS ON COMMENTS

GERMAN DZIEBEL

## ***Introduction***

The review of *The Cambridge Handbook of Kinship* by Dwight Read and Fadwa El Guindi highlights a serious theoretical and methodological regress in anthropologists' study of kinship. Kinship studies have been "guttled" of their biological, evolutionary, structural, functional, formal-semantic and logico-algebraic content and refurbished with "gender and relationality" ideas. A Cambridge handbook – whose very genre mandates the content to represent the best a discipline has to offer – contains historiographic blunders, vast literature gaps, bizarre topic omissions (such as kinship terminology or incest prohibitions), a Schneiderian escapism from more than 50 years ago and an absolute myopia regarding the critical importance of kinship as a subject matter in the natural and social sciences. Last but not the least, the 99% of contributors are women, which seems excessive in the modern age of diversity and inclusion.

Read and El Guindi counter with a short but razor-sharp critique of this confused volume. They reaffirm a holistic understanding of kinship that's "at once biological, societal, and cultural with an underlying transformational quality."

What is the relationship of kinship studies to anthropology then? And what's the relationship of anthropology to kinship studies? Is kinship studies a subdiscipline of anthropology, is anthropology a subdiscipline of kinship studies? Is kinship studies a metadiscipline similar to semiotics or phenomenology? Is kinship studies to anthropology what genetics is to biology? And does biology correspond in depth, scope and degree of integration to anthropology or to all of the social sciences?

I have been wrestling with all these questions as I have been working on a comprehensive bibliography of kinship studies over the past 25 years. It currently contains over 50,000 entries (Dziebel 2015; Dziebel 2022). I came up with a working notion of "gignetics" (from Greek *gignō* 'come into being, beget, engender') to capture the whole spectrum of academic engagements with the subject of kinship outside of genetics as a subfield of biology but adjacent to it. The very reduplicative form of the underlying Greek present tense verb *gignomai* is symbolic here because it points to the redoubling or continuation of biological kinship, heredity and reproduction in the domain of the personal, the social and the cultural.

## ***The extreme multidisciplinary of kinship studies***

The bibliography documents the striking finding that no matter the regional academic tradition – West European, Russian and East European, American or Chinese – kinship is not a pre-occupation of anthropology/ethnology/ethnography alone. Theology, political science, philosophy, logic, linguistics, sociology, history, psychology, evolutionary biology, primatology, demography, epidemiology – all either study kinship, use the metaphor of kinship to analyze their subject matter or build their subject matter around notions akin to kinship (for instance, "family" in sociolo-

gy). In many cases, these non-anthropological traditions in the study of kinship have a long history going back to the 18th century and earlier.

One can only marvel at the recurrence of the same kinship themes across vastly different times and utterly unexpected places. One of the Christian Church fathers, St. Augustine conducted an exegesis of the dogma of the Holy Trinity in the 4th century AD. Let's listen to some of his logic and wording:

And first we must notice, that by the word begotten is signified the same thing as is signified by the word son. For therefore a son, because begotten, and because a son, therefore certainly begotten. By the word unbegotten, therefore, it is declared that he is not son. But begotten and unbegotten are both of them terms suitably employed; whereas in Latin we can use the word *filius*, but the custom of the language does not allow us to speak of *infilii*. It makes no difference, however, in the meaning if he is called *non filius*; just as it is precisely the same thing if he is called *non genitus*, instead of *ingenitus*. For so the terms of both neighbor and friend are used relatively, yet we cannot speak of *invicinus* as we can of *inimicus*. Wherefore, in speaking of this thing or that, we must not consider what the usage of our own language either allows or does not allow, but what clearly appears to be the meaning of the things themselves.

And here, too, that question comes to light, as it can, which is wont to trouble many, Why the Holy Spirit is not also a son, since He, too, comes forth from the Father, as it is read in the Gospel. For the Spirit came forth, not as born, but as given; and so He is not called a son, because He was neither born, as the Only-begotten, nor made, so that by the grace of God He might be born into adoption, as we are.

In these paragraphs St. Augustine tackles kin terms (Lat *filius*), kin term grammar (*filius* is possible but *infilii* is not) just like future linguists would; he treats kin terms and words such as neighbor or friend as relational words, just like later logicians would. And finally he resorts to the concept of adoption as a way to explain the paradox of one of the faces of the Holy Trinity. And this is nearly 2000 years before anthropologists realized that adoption, step-kinship, fictive kinship or suckling must be considered in the context of the more familiar consanguinity and affinity. Augustine's treatise entitled "De Trinitate" from which those quotes were taken was written as a polemic against the Arian heresy. Arians denied the consubstantiality of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and explained the use of the kin terms as mere greetings. What does it remind an anthropologist of? The debate between Lewis H. Morgan and John Ferguson McLennan about the nature of kinship terms. McLennan responded to Morgan's pioneering *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* with a critical essay in which he attempted to reduce kinship terms to mere interpersonal greetings from the study of which no social evolution can be inferred.

This is what I refer to by "extreme multidisciplinary." When it comes to such a topic as kinship, an early theologian prefigures the linguists, the logicians and the anthropologists of the current era. Between 1859 and 1871, Lewis H. Morgan, the American anthropologist fascinated with American Indian cultures, conducts a comparative study of human kinship systems (Morgan 1871). He did not realize that in 1859 Augustus de Morgan, a British logician and a champion of ancient Indian wisdom in the philosophical circles of England, publishes a seminal article on the logical structure of kinship terms (De Morgan 1859).

A modern statistician routinely uses the term and the method of "correlation" without realizing that it originated from a study of the height of fathers and sons conducted by Francis Galton (1886). The term "correlation" originated in Galton's reading of de Morgan's treatise on kin-

ship terms as relational nouns as well as its subsequent application to a theory of signs by Charles Peirce. And the notions of “dependent” and “independent” variables are echoed in St. Augustine’s exegesis of the Father as “unbegotten” and the Son as “begotten.” And does it not satisfy another commenter, Keith Hart’s appeal to “metaphysical flexibility”?:

R.G. Collingwood’s logic of question/answer would help. His methodological principle was to keep asking, “What question is this the answer to?” Rather than assume that anthropologists using the term kinship belong in and dispute a single category, we might identify some of the field’s leading figures and ask what questions they tried to answer and how effectively... I share these authors’ view that there is too much of value in the study of kinship to write it off. But our metaphysics need to be more flexible. I see no reason why kinship as a collective noun should persist independently of the example of its great practitioners.

Even if we challenge kinship as an *a priori* category, our methodological journey from questions to answers and from independent to dependent variables is decisively generative, i.e., kinship-like.

Not only do scholars interested in the phenomenon of kinship read and quote each other, like any other scholars would; they also independently arrive at similar observations and conclusions, discover new angles to what’s essentially the same object of study and turn very different notions into essentially synonyms of an underlying kinship-like process of scientific inquiry.

Although the notion of an integrated study of the phenomenon of kinship outside and beyond genetics – the notion covered by my term “gignetics” – has never been articulated as such in the literature, there have been a number of attempts to unify different aspects of the study of human kinship into a single paradigm. For instance, the dean of the field of social history, Tamar Hareven, published an article entitled “The History of the Family as an Interdisciplinary Field.” In it, she called social historians to reach out to anthropologists, demographers, psychologists and sociologists to apply concepts available from other fields historically, to bridge gaps between social history (written by historians), psychohistory (written by psychologists) and cultural history written by anthropologists and to adopt anthropologists’ focus on the whole society.

Further examples of interdisciplinary integration around kinship studies include the collaboration between history and anthropology in the study of European family, between linguistics, population genetics and anthropology in the study of population prehistory in the Pacific, among others.

### ***Kinship as a microscopic look into macroprocesses***

There is an important unifying theme running through various disciplines dealing with kinship, namely an awareness that through the study of kinship we can understand larger social processes. For instance, anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace (1965, 233) wrote:

... kinship terms have been to the cultural anthropologist what rats have been to the experimental psychologist: small warm objects readily manipulated in research design yet...sufficiently similar to larger entities to justify their use as models of processes in a bigger world.

He is echoed by historian John Demos:

The family is an extremely fundamental and durable institution: it often provides a kind of common denominator, or baseline for a whole culture whose various parts may differ substantially in other respects. [“Various parts” refers to political economy, ideology, etc.]

### ***The psychological, the social, the cultural and the biological in the study of kinship***

As pointed out by Read and El Guindi in their review, one remarkable property of the phenomenon of kinship is its visibility in all modern human organizational systems or levels of experience. A structural-functionalist anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, entitled one of his books *The Father in Primitive Psychology* (1927). In this work, Malinowski managed to show the biological aspects of kinship (physiological paternity presumably denied by the Trobriands), the psychological aspect (the growth development of fatherless children in a matrilineal society as inspired by Freud's argument for the importance of incestuous desires and a filial conflict in the genesis of the Ego), the social aspect (the continuing influence of fathers on their offspring through interactions with their wives) and the cultural aspect (the belief in the spirit entering a woman's body through intercourse). So, the same theme of fatherhood runs through the biological, the psychological, the social and the cultural realms.

### ***Kinship as the object and method of study***

Yet another noteworthy property of kinship is its ability to morph from being an object of study to being a method of study. Linguists have concluded that kinship terms function in the human language as both objects (as in my brother) and predicates (as in John and I are brothers). This is true of the way an intellectual object is constructed. Let's take the example of totemism. In 1869-1870, John McLennan (1869-1870) defined totemism (from Anishinabe *ototam* 'my kinsman') as a tribal belief in common descent between a human group and an animal species. In this case, (a belief in) kinship and the resulting social organization into totemic clans is an object of study in the field of comparative religion.

But just a year prior, in 1868, Lewis H. Morgan working among the Anishinabe Indians since the early 1840s argued that humans and higher animals (specifically beavers) are akin to each other in their non-verbal or pre-verbal cognitive and communicative processes.

In this case, kinship is a method of analysis in ecology and animal psychology that allows scholars to interpret beaver behavior in our own terms.

Similarly, linguistics studies the grammar, the semantics and the pragmatics of kinship terms (and psycholinguists the peculiarities of the acquisition of kinship terms by children) treating them as objects of study, while historical linguists use "kinship" and "family" as methodologies for classifying languages and lexical items into "language families" bound by "linguistic kinship" (Sprachverwandschaft of Neogrammarians) (Langacker 2017).

The proven ability of kinship to function in a dual role of an object and a method of inquiry further justifies the formulation of gignetics as a synthetic, interdisciplinary approach to kinship.

### ***Kinship as a "total biological and cultural system"***

Much has been said over the past 100+ years regarding the cultural vs. the biological nature of human kinship. From the mid-century debates about "genealogy" vs. "category" in kinship terminologies to the polemic around polysemy vs. extensionism in the meaning of kinship terms to the nature vs. nurture battles in and out of kinship studies to the recent critique of both constructivism and the ontological turn in kinship studies by Warren Shapiro (2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018), the disagreements between the camps are severe and unabating. A global look at writings about kinship across disciplines suggests that, while kinship is at its core a biological and genealogical phenomenon, it's too restrictive to reduce biology to the event of birth. The

event of death is just as inherently present in the workings of human kinship as birth. From the reincarnation beliefs in Middle India described by Robert Parkin (1988), to the existence of special designation of kin by their deceased relatives among the Penan of Borneo (Needham 1959), to the emphasis on widowhood and orphanage in the literature on the history of medieval European family and in family sociology (Anderson 1984), to the pivotal role of an individual's death in the theory of kin selection (or broadly "inclusive fitness" and "evolutionary altruism") (comp. Haldane's hilarious but telling summary thereof: "I will gladly die for 2 brothers, 4 uncles or 8 cousins," Hamilton 1964).

Death in the gignetic paradigm has just as much generative power as kinship by birth (in the structuralist-functionalist tradition) or marital alliance (in structuralism and the alliance theory). It is just as "biological" as birth, and humans factor it into their total systems of kin classification and kin behavior. Among examples of unified cross-cultural encodings of kinship, marriage, adoption and death are the practices of children exchange next to marital exchange and adoption of enemies in the Pacific.

### ***Conclusion***

The enduring appeal of the concept of kinship as an epistemological tool offering a greater analytical depth to the students of human cultures, societies and populations stems from kinship's several distinct properties. First, kinship as an object of study is discipline-neutral. In the course of the ongoing project of compiling a comprehensive bibliography of kinship studies in anthropology it has transpired that kinship (or its close epistemological kin such as family, heredity, reproduction, etc.) enjoys a special place in the social (and even biological) sciences by virtue of its extreme multidisplinary. A whole variety of scholarly disciplines and subdisciplines – including linguistics, logic, sociology, history, psychology, evolutionary biology, population genetics, primatology, demography, epidemiology, theology – study kinship or use the metaphor of kinship to analyze their subject matter. In many cases, these non-anthropological traditions in the study of kinship have a long history going back to the 18th century and earlier. Second, kinship offers scholars an opportunity to study macroprocesses through the analysis of microprocesses. Third, kinship straddles biological, psychological, social and cultural realities thus enabling a scholar to avoid reducing the complexity of human realities to one dimension and one dimension only. Fourth, kinship can function as both an object and a method of scientific inquiry. Finally, cross-cultural analysis shows that kinship cannot be narrowly defined as dealing with matters pertaining to birth and marriage but must of necessity cover a wider ontobiological matrix from birth to death, from marriage to adoption, fosterage and "fictive kinship" and from divorce to remarriage.

This new, more complete understanding of human kinship and the dynamics of social reproduction in small societies, industrial nations and artificial worlds opens the door to circumscribe a new anthropology-led, cross-discipline tentatively labeled gignetics. Gignetics begins roughly where genetics leaves off by covering a whole gamut of biologically-grounded individual, social and cultural systems participating in the reproduction of human and non-human species.

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## ADRIANA ATHILA

Eu gostaria de agradecer a Dwight e Fadwa, antes de mais nada, pelo constante ânimo, regado por uma rara generosidade intelectual, em criativamente promoverem discussões sobre o controverso tema do "parentesco". Esta generosidade permite que uma antropóloga "como eu" possa se sentir continuamente instigada, tanto pelo tema - com o qual tão mais me reencontro, quanto mais pretenda fugir dele (Athila 2019a) - quanto pelas reflexões propostas por sua resenha.

Eu não tenho tanta certeza quanto eles sobre o que é, enfim, o "parentesco". Advertindo sobre o caráter autocentrado do meu comentário, até porque meus colegas Fadwa e Dwight se ativeram à teoria antropológica com precisão, eu gostaria de trazer a minha experiência etnográfica entre os Rikbaktsa, um povo indígena que vive no sudoeste da Amazônia brasileira, para tentar expressar algo sobre o que parentesco não pode ser ou não pode ser "apenas". Neste caminho, creio me aproximar substancialmente da leitura que fizeram ao "Cambridge Handbook of Kinship", editado por Sandra Bramford (2021).

Como diz Deleuze, os filósofos têm mais o que fazer, muito pouco prazer e mesmo horror a discussões. Nós antropólogos, por outro lado, parecemos nos alimentar de discussões e pluralidades, tendo como ponto de partida a falta de interesse da antropologia em chegar a uma resposta única ou definitiva para qualquer debate.

Ainda que houvesse um atípico consenso analítico em um campo que se renova ao alimentar controvérsias insolúveis, certas ideias, dúvidas e discussões persistiriam entre aqueles junto com quem pesquisamos. Chegar a alguma conclusão definitiva ou ponto final, ao contrário de elogio, na minha avaliação, seria também um sério equívoco de "gestão" do trabalho seminal de Schneider.

Apesar de não ser uma pesquisadora em/sobre parentesco "algébrico", como podem imaginar desde o início, não me apraz deduzir que terminologias de parentesco ou algo como a "biologia" – o que cada povo ou grupo social considere que possam ser a "biologia" e, então, a "reprodução" - e suas implicações sobre alguma sociedade, sejam questões menos importantes ou devam ser definitivamente abandonadas pelo pensamento antropológico. Ao contrário.

A mesma coisa, penso eu, acontece ao "parentesco". Explico por quê.

De acordo com minhas pesquisas, não é possível que os Rikbaktsa existam "fora do parentesco" ou de alguma conceitualização sobre genealogias. Como não falarem sobre quem e a que tempo, momento e/ou interesse, está em um ou outro lugar em sua concepção genealógica, mesmo que para discutir, negar ou contradizer esta posição?

Em campo realizei o exercício de seguir o trabalho magnífico de Robert Hahn (1976, 1978), sobre as categorias de "endereçamento" e o "parentesco negociado" entre os Rikbaktsa. Também, no que diz respeito à sua preciosa intuição de que eles consideravam os mais diferentes seres do mundo como potencialmente passíveis de se "misturar", combinar e recombinar para gerar ou "reproduzir" novos ou, como prefiro dizer, "outros" seres. Nestas operações podem estar envolvidas entidades com graus diversos de alteridade e, em si mesmas, heterogêneas em sua constituição ou genealogia.

O resultado não surpreendeu minhas expectativas.

Em algum momento distante e primevo do mundo, do sangue que escorre do rabo arrancado da preguiça, amparado por uma panela de barro, seus companheiros se pintam, por achá-lo "bonito" (*tsapyina*). E, desta mistura entre sangue, diferentes homens e outras substâncias - como carvão, sol em diversas quantidades e lugares do corpo, jenipapo - surgem outros seres, como três espécies de araras, o macaco coatá macho, sua fêmea e uma série de pássaros. E surgem em uma determinada ordem, ainda que ela possa ser discutível (Athila 2006).

Contemporaneamente, pessoas com posições genealógicas teoricamente idênticas, como por exemplo, irmãos ou irmãs de mesmo sexo - mas quem poderá saber se ambos têm o mesmo conjunto de pais!?!?! (Athila 2019a) -, podem chamar ou se remeter a uma mesma pessoa utilizando termos ou categorias de parentesco completamente diferentes. E isso pode se dar – e mudar – em diferentes momentos e situações; e por diferentes razões. É possível que um deles simplesmente não “reconheça” a pessoa como “parente”, não “chame” ou se “remeta” a ela ou ele, enquanto o outro ou outra pode dizer que a pessoa é alguém com quem mantém laços muito próximos.

Eu concordo que a ausência de diagramas não deixa de ser uma fragilidade do meu próprio trabalho (Athila 2016, 2019a). Talvez fosse mais inteligível expressar aquelas ideias através deles, ou de um conjunto deles, gerado tanto por aquele desacordo ou aparente inconsistência terminológica, quanto pelo fato dos Rikbaktsa serem firmemente patrilineares e, por sua vez, também atribuírem ao pai e ao sêmen a constituição da criança, ao mesmo tempo em que praticam, fartamente, a paternidade múltipla.

Contudo, para além de não ter habilidade para fazê-los, sempre quis destacar que este tipo de informação tem pouco a contribuir se alijada de uma explanação etnográfica densa sobre a práxis do parentesco. Não que as genealogias também não expressem esta práxis.

Seguindo a falta de interesse dos Rikbaktsa em fixar definitivamente "paternidades" - o que possivelmente introduziria incontáveis variáveis em sua álgebra - , eu queria levar a sério o que homens e mulheres diziam sobre assuntos como reprodução, a paternidade (múltipla), as "adoções" de crianças, seus casamentos "feios" (incestuosos em algum grau), alguns dos quais podiam se "regularizar" no tempo e a constituição sociológica híbrida e discutível - para alguém e/ou em uma dada situação - que algum indivíduo pudesse ter. Eu queria considerar seriamente o que falavam sobre tudo isso, de modo que uma "genealogia formal" não fosse tomada como aquilo que "realmente fazem".

O que dizem é também o que fazem: um entremeado inseparável que faz o "descritivo" e o "classificatório", a "norma" e a "violação" se constituírem mutuamente. Inclusive saberes coincidentes com aqueles de uma biologia "ocidental", digamos assim, podiam ser chamados a dialogar, a exemplo de sua singular gestão de exames de DNA de paternidade (Athila 2019a).

Nada disso significou dizer que as genealogias ou que o parentesco “algébrico” não existisse ali ou fosse dispensável a alguma perspectiva ou compreensão de sua vida social. Meu foco, todavia, sempre foi em como os indígenas podiam transformar determinadas asserções terminológicas, como normas (de casamento ou de desempenho de tarefas rituais), apenas porque, ao mesmo tempo, reafirmavam os princípios estruturais da coisa toda.

Esta disposição em "fazer diferente" do protocolo não se aplicava exclusivamente às genealogias. Só quem dominava regras e conceitos com tanta habilidade, podia tão bem burlá-los. O objetivo era tornar tudo - o tocar de flautas, o casamento entre pessoas de clãs de uma mesma

metade ou a pintura de alguém - "belo" ou "adequado" (*tsapyina*). A "beleza", como disse, foi também a motivação primária para criarem outros seres há muito tempo atrás, em determinada ordem, a partir do sangue que escorre da preguiça, amparado por uma panela de barro.

Podemos discordar sobre o que é o parentesco ou quais são suas fronteiras, as quais eu particularmente não creio ser interessante determinar com muita clareza. Ou, para aqueles que consideram o “parentesco” como um fenômeno em si mesmo, podemos ter nossas próprias escolhas sobre como descrever e abordá-lo etnograficamente.

Como no caso etnográfico Rikbaktsa, mais ou até “menos” do que uma, muitas ou “discutíveis” genealogias, na medida que elas não se dão ou não se encerram ao nascimento de alguém, o parentesco é uma perspectiva estrutural de descrição de uma cultura, de uma sociedade ou grupo e, dentro deles, sobre a qualidade e o comportamento, no tempo, dos laços entre pessoas e diversos tipos de coletivos. Como sugiro aqui, eles podem incluir vários tipos de seres, para além daqueles que os antropólogos consideram como fundamentalmente "humanos" e opto por não os qualificar por "não humanos", pois creio que os Rikbaktsa não concordariam com esta descrição precária.

O que chamamos “parentesco” pode ser uma metáfora poderosa para pensar sociedades indígenas amazônicas como grupos ditos “urbanos”, permitindo e, mais que isso, tornando cada vez mais mutuamente elucidativas, as trilhas entre diferentes tradições e conjuntos de saberes, entre aldeias, comunidades e cidades. Aliás, os mais variados tipos de sujeitos têm transitado contemporaneamente por estes espaços, com destaque para indígenas, em uma existência multi-situada.

Quase todas as coisas/situações podem ser descritas através das “lentes” do “parentesco”. A natureza dos laços que unem ou desunem mais permanente ou circunstancialmente pessoas e coletivos; como seus corpos/almas são formados e “trans”-formados, à luz de seus conhecimentos singulares, são temas cruciais.

Neste momento, trabalho em um artigo sobre os efeitos da monetarização e de políticas de transferência de renda entre os Rikbaktsa. O modo como eles concebem o “parentesco”, categorias de parentes, suas relações e as implicações entre seu sistema atitudinal e a socialidade Rikbaktsa a longo prazo - algo que não é (apenas) sobre “harmonia” e “corpos completamente identificados”, como usualmente o parentesco é tomado em diferentes visões do parentesco ameríndio - tem completa relação com os efeitos do dinheiro e das políticas sociais.

Por um lado, o “parentesco” permite compreender como o dinheiro é distribuído ali, contrariamente ao que poderiam ser duas classes de rendimento bastante marcadas, entremeadas por uma terceira, com valores de rendimento intermediários. Por outro lado, aponta para como o dinheiro, em proporções inéditas, e mesmo operações de “compra” e “venda”, ao serem encampadas pela lógica Rikbaktsa de viver o parentesco, acabam inflacionando a possibilidade de conflitos entre eles.

Em uma sociedade onde o “inimigo mora ao lado”, e às vezes, “dentro”, na co-residência (o que nos faz rever a validade de adotar *a priori* topologias que blindam determinados “espaços” e “categorias” de parentes, distinções muitas vezes mais importantes para nós, antropólogos, do que para eles), a generosidade esperada entre parentes e a recomendável proximidade de suas relações são sempre "arriscadas" (Athila, 2006).

Os esperados efeitos "deletérios" que o dinheiro possar ter, conforme as etnografias sobre o tema os têm considerado, ao menos ali, não advém da penetração de uma suposta "lógica im-pessoal do mercado", mas de uma exacerbação da lógica de sua socialidade, de como a vivem, em uma existência continuamente produzida e arriscada em suas relações de proximidade. O dinheiro, talvez de modo inédito, tem alimentado proximidades e conflitos, por reforçar o modo através do qual o "parentesco" é vivido pelos Rikbaktsa.

Eu não consigo imaginar como entender ou descrever as múltiplas paternidades e a patri-linearidade cravadas pelo papel determinante das mulheres na atribuição de paternidades (mutáveis ao longo da vida de alguém) (Athila 2019a, 2019b, 2010), as festas e a vida cotidiana Rikbaktsa, de outra maneira que não compreenda também o que chamamos de "parentesco", com discussões que são muito bem-vindas.

Os Rikbaktsa sempre enfatizaram, brigando comigo até, que eu deveria viver muito tempo com eles para entender que a vida ritual, mais do que organizada por regras e prescrições, em si mesmas, é performada por pessoas que vivem juntas. Trata-se de pessoas reais, que estão em uma mesma aldeia ou em aldeias diferentes, dentro de determinadas posições genealógicas (por mais dinâmicas e discutíveis que elas fossem para eles), como pais (muitos, cada qual com sua própria implicação "genealógica", digamos assim, para seu filho ou filha e outras pessoas relacionadas a eles ou elas), maridos, esposas, irmãos mais velhos, cunhados, sobrinhos e sobrinhas, mães e por aí em diante.

As festas são as ocasiões nas quais muitas dúvidas e informações sobre aquelas pessoas serão satisfeitas e os dados sobre metades, clãs e outros aspectos aparecerão mais claramente. Muitas vezes eu me surpreendia com o que eu via. Perguntava e recebia uma explicação.

Um exemplo foi ver um homem de uma determinada metade, responsável por fazer flautas, as experimentando, como é o atributo da outra metade. Ele quer, ele sabe fazer a flauta tocar "bonito", ficar "afinada"; seu "tio" (homem mais velho da outra metade, que pode ser o MB, por exemplo) ensinou a ele e ele aprendeu; logo isso é possível. E poderia haver outras razões também, relacionadas á possibilidade de que aquele homem tivesse, entre seus genitores, "pais" pertencentes às diferentes metades.

Não que não houvesse regras. Ao contrário.

Por esta razão, regras e prescrições podem quase sempre mudar, mas jamais sem receberem uma explicação sistêmica ou baseada em suas conceituações sobre o "parentesco". Mesmo quando a informação genealógica, em si mesma, pudesse parecer ou ser dita como não importante ou estar sendo discutida, permanecia ali, com um papel estruturante, inclusive da gestão e negociação de suas relações.

A gente deve entender a composição sociológica de uma aldeia – com todas as discussões que são parte do que o parentesco é e, ao mesmo tempo, que se expressam através dele – se queremos entender sobre o que trata um rito ou mesmo uma disputa - narrativa ou em um processo de DNA - sobre a paternidade de alguém, por exemplo.

Finalmente, uma coisa sobre os "estudos feministas" da década de 70 – como eu argumento em meus trabalhos de 2010 e 2019 – é que quando negam a existência da "biologia", por um lado, reafirmam sua "existência", ao derivarem o "poder das mulheres" de um "poder de reprodução", com um "dado natural". Como argumento, é preciso muito mais e, às vezes, muito menos do que uma relação entre (um) homem e (uma) mulher, concebidos ainda como entidades

de atributos contrastivos, para “fazer gente”, novos ou outros seres, como acontece nos Rikbaktsa.

Nada é mais essencialista do que tomar este ponto de vista para como se “fazem bebês”, como ponto de partida etnográfico. Extrapolando esta abordagem para os estudos clássicos, é preciso também entender o que determinado coletivo considera como sendo seu “dato biológico de base”; sobre quem ou o que é preciso para fazer bebês e estabelecer uma determinada configuração genealógica entre as pessoas.

Concordo que o poder reprodutivo é importante. Todavia, como o “parentesco” em si mesmo, este “poder” é um conceito que pode derivar de ou ser reinvestido por, diferentes “fisiológicas”. Há muitas coisas anteriores e obrigatórias para se “fazer pessoas” e laços entre pessoas, em sociedades amazônicas, como em outros grupos sociais, culturas ou nações.

É alguma coisa que está além e, em alguns casos, aquém do que um “ocidente”, termo que demarca uma visão cada vez mais inclusiva de outras epistemologias de “fazer gente”, usualmente chama de “biologia”; uma “lógica” ou modo de explicar a constituição de “corpos”, suas “funções” e relações sociais.

Como nós, os Rikbaktsa têm seus próprios conceitos, discussões e dúvidas acerca destas questões.

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VANESSA R. LEA

### **Summary**

*These comments address Dwight Read and Fadwa El Guindi's review article of the Cambridge Handbook of Kinship and their General Introduction to Kinship vol 1(1). Whilst agreeing with these authors concerning the universality of kinship and the shortcomings of the concept of relatedness, it is argued that there is no inherent incompatibility between their standpoints and feminist perspectives, and that the question of gender diversity cannot be sidelined if this new journal is to thrive.*

The General Introduction to the first issue of this new journal reads: "The journal, *Kinship*, is dedicated to the study of kinship in all of its facets" (2021:1(1)1. I read these opening words with great pleasure. On the next page I was dismayed to discover that Read and El Guindi (2021:1(1):2) consider the volume *Gender and Kinship: Essays Toward a Unified Analysis*, organized by Collier and Yanagisako (1987), to have been an attempt at dismantling the study of kinship. The introductory essay has been an inspiration to my postdoctoral writing on the social organization and kinship of the Mëbêngôkre (Kayapó) in Central Brazil, resonating with my attempt to deal with a novel kind of matriliney, in the form of matri-houses or Houses. That book was preceded by MacCormack and Strathern (1980), a key publication for denaturalizing women, as part of the rumblings that gave rise to the implosion of the nature/culture dichotomy.

What initially drew my attention to Read and El Guindi's 2022 article was my own disappointment with the chapter on matriliney in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (2016), written by Jessica Johnson. Despite the overall merits of the article, Johnson referred to the book *Dialectical Societies: The Gê and Bororo of Central Brazil*, edited by David Maybury-Lewis (1979), as the last to mention the existence of matriliney in South America. I have been writing on Mëbêngôkre matriliney since 1986 (1992; 1995; 1997; 2001; 2002; 2010; 2012; 2019; 2020), but there has been so much opposition to the idea that a terminology characterized by Omaha equations could be matrilineal, that being heard and, moreover, taken seriously, has been like trying to communicate across a bulletproof glass wall. The Mëbêngôkre dataset published online in 2020 confirms the exogamous nature of their matri-houses; it is presently being explored with the Programme for the Use and Computation of Kinship (PUCK). The developer of another kinship programme, Genopro, for making diagrams, also informed me that various North American First Peoples have used this genealogical programme, though I lack further information on this at the present time.

In the third volume of *Kinship*, in the article: "What is Kinship About? Again. Critique of the Cambridge Handbook of Kinship, edited by Sandra Bamford" (2019), the authors, Read and El Guindi (2022: 4), criticize the editor for reducing kinship "to gendered social relatedness". I have witnessed the demise of the study of kinship during the first decades of the twenty second century, and I agree that over enthusiasm with the notion of relatedness has been partly responsible. The fact that it is a somewhat wishy-washy concept has contributed to its success as a Jack of All Trades, applicable to almost any kind of data. "Mutuality of being" is yet another overly

elastic concept that could be applied (beyond kinship), not only to humanity, but even to Gaia or Mother Nature in the Anthropocene.

Relatedness (inadvertently or otherwise) followed a direction pioneered by Bourdieu (1972; 1977), summoning attention to the performative aspects of kinship as played out in everyday life through nurture, commensality and such like. This is not incompatible with the study of kinship terminologies, indeed it can enrich their understanding, reducing their apparent aridness that makes young students turn away from them. Relatedness has indeed been welcomed enthusiastically as having replaced what was formerly understood as kinship, disparaged by many as mere algebra.

If one were to envisage kinship terminologies as patterns, comprised of combinations of elements, then perhaps more people would be attracted to them. If one wishes to knit a sweater one follows a pattern, mental or written. If one were to improvise with the needles and wool then, for most of us, a sweater would be unlikely to emerge. People get intellectual satisfaction from contemplating indigenous art forms such as pottery, body painting and featherwork, but cringe from kinship because its patterns are not easy to appreciate; they cannot be photographed and hung on the wall for aesthetic contemplation.

In Brazil, from where I write, “thick description” was once heralded as what social anthropology was about. In ethnology, perspectivism was all most people were interested in for decades, followed by the ontological turn, arriving at the present so called post-colonial trend, focusing on relations between humans and non-humans as part of a cosmo-political order. The older one becomes the more it is apparent that fashion is not only of concern to those dealing with Haute Couture, but social anthropologists likewise. I have wondered whether this trend to follow the pied piper could be at least partially caused by the mercantilization of public education, with production resembling a conveyer belt, with people frantic to move through the system and publish without the necessary time and resources to be creative, or even conduct detailed research, let alone learn another language.

The dearth of kinship courses in contemporary departments of Social Anthropology reminds me somewhat of Ray Bradbury’s book *Fahrenheit 451*, with books burned and a few individuals trying to memorize what is left, to preserve the knowledge contained in them. On the other hand, around 2018, Karupi, one of my Mëbêngôkre interlocutors (recently deceased), together with two indigenous teacher-researchers, organized a 51 page list of kinship terms to avoid such knowledge being lost by future generations. In an analogous case, a co-supervised (by Bruna Franchetto and myself) Marubo indigenous doctoral student, Nelly Dollis (2022), was given the task by her people (*nawavo*) of laying out the traditional kinship system, known in the literature as a matrilineal Australian type system of alternate generations, with marriage sections (see Mellati, J. C. 1977). There is currently considerable interest in matrifocality in Brazil, but people confuse this with matrilineality, besides matriarchy, due to the lack of reading about kinship.

Lea (1986; 2004) pioneered the analysis of triadic kin terms among the Mëbêngôkre, a phenomenon of verbal eloquence and logical consistency found elsewhere (so far) only in Australia. In both North America and Europe this fell on deaf ears, though interest has been shown in Australia among linguists who study Australian Indigenous languages and cultures (see Blythe 2018; Garde 2013). I have also collected and reconstructed detailed genealogies as a methodolo-

gical procedure, something that does not clash with Read's kin term products, generated recursively according to his analysis of kinship terminologies, dispensing with genealogical calculations.

Though I would agree with Read & El Guindi (2022) in finding the idea of gendered relationality to be inadequate, I would have no problem with the idea of gendered kinship, in the sense of gender normative categories providing a backbone (or grid) for constructing kinship logics. In sum, if this new and much welcome journal were to alienate so-called "feminists" it would dispel itself to the annals of history. The epistemological transition from the existence of "two sexes" to "gender diversity" produced a sociocultural benchmark and turning point from which there is no returning to a binary illusion. This is not the place to discuss what feminism is, and it was unclear why the Read & El Guindi (2022) raised the question of a "feminist agenda", something that is surely contextual. The fact that some feminists have had a rather dismal relationship with the study of kinship should not be interpreted to mean that feminism is incompatible with the analysis of kinship per se.

Coincidentally, these lines were written just after the launch of a BBC podcast called "Political animals", presenting a rereading of Darwin by the zoologist Lucy Cooke and other researchers. It is argued that women have a different perspective than men and that this is not synonymous with feminism being ideologically driven; evolutionary biology is deemed androcentric, with recent research defying sexist stereotypes. It is affirmed that the hetero-normative view has dominated science for a couple of centuries now, and the specific legacy of Darwin has been to portray females as passive and coy. The new research deals with cases of female animals described as promiscuous, with the offspring of multiple mates tending to live longer than those of one mate. Salvador Mirales describes the Jacana bird in Nicaragua as having up to four mates, contributing to a stronger, more robust clutch. There is food for thought here concerning practices such as ceremonial group sex and what has enigmatically been translated into English as "wantons" (from German), in the anthropological literature on the Northern Jê (see Crocker & Crocker 1994).

In sum, there is no inherent contradiction between the study of kinship and feminism, and not all feminists equate kinship with relatedness. It is time to try and reap the benefits of both perspectives with their respective, non-overlapping angles.

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I think it a good idea to dump the words “biological” and “cultural,” which the so-called “new kinship studies” (hereafter NK) employ rhetorically. NK’s use of the former word connotes inevitability and the absence of freedom, though I doubt that any philosopher of biology, or any practicing biologist, would view his/her subject-matter in this non-probalistic way. The hopelessly polysemic word “culture” is used by NK as a contrast, implying choice and freedom. That this contrast has been employed by some of NK’s critics is besides the point.

Instead, I suggest we attend to the operations we as ethnographers perform to elicit testimony from our informants. Such attention, I am fairly certain, will reveal that non-Western kinship notions are not very different from their Western counterparts – more specifically, that the former, like the latter, are founded on local notions of procreative connection, from which they are extended to people and things less closely related procreatively, and even to people and things without such relationship. Here we need to attend to the enormous data on lexical marking, which has been in the ethnographic record since Morgan, to informant statements of the sort “I call him ‘father’ but he’s not my ‘true’ father, not the man who begot me.” Also pertinent, though not quite so extensive, are the data on substance-sharing, which strongly suggest that those locally reckoned as close procreative kin are held to share the most substance.

NK ignores most of these compendious data and so is able to pass off the demonstrably false idea of a marked West/Rest contrast. This is true of David Schneider, whose command of semantic theory was sophomoric, as well as of most of his many admirers. The best example of the latter is Janet Carsten’s preposterous rendition of Malay “relatedness.” Anyone reading this who wants substantiation of these remarks should see my article on Schneider in *Oceania* a couple of years ago, and my critique of Carsten in the *Per Hage Festschrift*.

So NK is a scholarly enterprise which is not very scholarly. It is winning the day in the academy because it plays on the present-day fad to “deconstruct” established knowledge, to render that knowledge as a creation of Western male anthropologists’ effort to project Western ideas about sociality onto the Rest. Instead, it proffers allegedly more nuanced, allegedly more feminist-sensitive, renditions of non-Western ideas which are in fact little more than literary fictions.

This is bad enough, but it gets worse. It’s something of a surprise to me that neither the Read/El Guindi critique nor any of its commentators attend to NK’s illiberal and authoritarian thrust. Despite all its rhetoric about human freedom, there is virtually no record in the NK corpus of a reasoned response to critics. Instead, we have Marshall Sahlins’ retort to me (in the *JRAI* a few years back) that the extensionist position I hold is “arch-conservative,” which struck me forceably as no more than a concession, and a set of related facts having to do with the conduct of scholarly gatherings. I append the following for the benefit of anyone interested in the world of the academy:

The last two AAA meetings I attended featured both Kinship Circle as well as NK sessions. Not a single one of the NK people came to the Kinship Circle sessions, though several of the latter people, myself included, appeared at the NK sessions. There, I was surprised to learn, no Q&A was allowed after the presentations. At the end of one of the sessions I decided to approach the NK presenters in order to query them. One of them, noticing my name-tag, said to

me, with narrowed eyes, “We know the kind of work you do,” and then refused to talk with me. If looks could kill, I’d be a dead man.

The critical essay by Dwight and Fadwa seems to me to make some important points and so is worthy of a reasoned response from the NK pseudo-scholars. But I’d be amazed if it gets one.