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India and the Study of Kinship Terminologies

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"K INSHIP" as an anthropological object, and anthropology as the observing subject of kinship, were mutually constituted in the middle of the nineteenth century. The constituting of kinship was not a creation from nothing, like divine creation ; rather, in the manner of human creations, it came about as a gathering together into a new configuration of elements that had previously existed in a dispersed state. From the law, from ethnographies of missionaries, explorers and philosophical travellers, from the Classics and the Bible were drawn a variety of existing concepts – of patriarchy and matriarchy, forbidden degrees of marriage, rules of inheritance, and so forth – as material for the making of the new thing, kinship. The inventors of kinship – Lewis H. Morgan, J. F. McLennan, Henry Maine, Johann J. Bachofen, Numa D. Fustel de Coulanges – were thrown together through the making of this new object, collaborating in its production without really intending to, or even being aware that they were doing so (Trautmann 1987).

In many ways the decisive contribution was that of L. H. Morgan, in his master work, the *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (Morgan 1871), which conceptualized kinship as existing in the form of a limited number of systems that, as such, could be rigorously compared ; for by doing so he conceived an object for anthropology that was complex and required extensive study, creating at the same time an important part of the raison d'être for a special discipline devoted to its study. Kinship terminologies were central to this conception of kinship, and thus to the creation of anthropology itself.

Constituting kinship terminologies as objects of comparative study involved giving fully conscious recognition and formal expression to the terms we have learned as young children and which we use readily and without reflection. Because the kinship terminology, like language itself, is both lodged in unconscious knowledge and yet fully available to consciousness for articulation in speech, because it is at once quotidian and occult, it takes a special effort to call into consciousness the relations of reciprocity among the terms that bind them

together into a logically organized set. The formal recognition of kinship terminology as a self-contained system did not come about by way of first lessons in one's own kinship terminology during childhood, nor through adult self-reflection, but by comparison with other terminologies and the apprehension of their difference. Let us briefly trace this moment of emergence.

Morgan held that kinship terminologies are aspects of language that, because they are logically-ordered and hence more resistant to change, are more conservative than both the vocabulary and the grammar of a language, constituting for this reason « a new instrument for ethnology », more powerful than the comparison of vocabularies and grammars in uncovering historic relations among peoples. Thus, in a paper called « System of Consanguinity of the Red Race » delivered before the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1859[1], he wrote :

> « Language changes its vocabulary, not only, but also modifies its grammatical structure in the progress of ages ; thus eluding the inquiries which philologists have pressed it to answer ; but a system of relationships once matured, and brought into operation, is, in the nature of things, more unchangeable than language – not in the names employed as a vocabulary of relationships, for these are mutable, but in the ideas which underlie the system itself. »

Morgan found the new anthropological object, which we call kinship terminology, deep in the heart of language. To understand the conditions under which it rose to consciousness we have to consider the role kinship terms had within the project of what I should like to call linguistic ethnology.

In the eighteenth century, the European preoccupation with the intersection of languages and nations issued in a project of linguistic ethnology whereby the relations among nations were to be uncovered by determining the relations among languages, arranging them in a tree resembling an anthropological diagram of segmentary lineages. The method employed a simple-seeming tool : the vocabulary list, juxtaposing columns of words from various peoples whose historical relations would be revealed by the similarities of words across the rows. This device seems simple but in fact rested upon a rather complex theory about history and language, to the effect that there are certain words every language must have at the moment of its creation, and that these are the most durable and conservative core of the lexicon of a language. Kinship terms regularly feature in the list of words that make up the core vocabulary.

Thus Leibniz, believing that nothing would throw greater light on the origins of nations than the collation of languages, called for the collection of Pater Nosters and glossaries, and drew up a vocabulary list for the purpose which seems to have served as a model for subsequent lists of this kind, the *Desiderata circa linguas populorum* (Leibniz 1768)[2]. Leibniz's list includes the *propinquitates & aetates,* among

1. Lewis H. Morgan, « System of Consanguinity of the Red Race », August 1859, unpublished (Lewis Henry Morgan Papers, Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester, NY).
2. Leibniz's work is discussed in Gulya 1974 ; on Leibniz's program for linguistic ethnology, see especially the excellent essays in Aarsleff 1982 : 42-100.

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whom we find the kinship terms *pater, mater, avus, filius, filia, frater, soror, patruus, maritus* and *uxor* ; other sub-lists are words for numbers, parts of the body, necessities, *naturalia,* and actions. Here the words of the kinship vocabulary remain a series within a series, having no special virtue of their own and being interchangeable with others of the series ; so that the conceptualization and use of them is part and parcel of the more general program of linguistic ethnology.

In North America, for example, François-Xavier de Charlevoix articulated that program very clearly, and as a departure from the ethnological program of earlier writers, who compared the morals, customs, religions and traditions of the American Indians with those of the Old World, as a method of determining the question of their origin. Such previous authors, Charlevoix said, have neglected the one means that will solve the problem of origins : the comparison of languages. Morals, customs, religions and traditions are subject to change. It is not the same with languages, or at least they remain sufficiently different to distinguish them from other languages. If, then, American languages were found to have the characters of « les Langues Mères » one could not doubt that they go back to the first origin of languages (at the Tower of Babel) and that the peopling of this hemisphere occurred shortly after the first dispersion of peoples ; for no one can reasonably doubt that the great-grand children of Noah could travel to the New World (Charlevoix 1994, I : 153-155). Charlevoix's statement draws it to our attention that the eighteenth-century conception of linguistic and ethnological diversity was imagined within a very short frame of a few thousand years, and fitted into the segmentary lineage of Noah, following the Biblical narrative of the confusion of tongues and the dispersal of Noah's progeny – the framework that I call « Mosaic ethnology » (Trautmann 1997 : 37-61).

The program which Charlevoix sketched, restated by Thomas Jefferson, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (*ca* 1782 : 179-180 ; see Trautmann 1987 : 80-81), was carried into effect by means of a printed vocabulary list against which were collected the comparable words in the languages of the different Indian nations, which Jefferson devised during his presidency of the American Philosophical Society. The project was completed and the results published by Jefferson's protégé and successor as president of the same society, the Huguenot Stephen Du Ponceau, in his *Mémoire sur le système grammatical des langues de quelques nations indiennes de l'Amerique du Nord* (1838) for the Prix Volney. The historical-linguistic investigation of the American Indian languages continues, along the lines of Charlevoix's proposal, to this day, even though it has long outgrown the original chronological and Biblical framing within which it came into being.

About the same time as Jefferson, similar projects were being carried out in Russia, by the Empress Catherine (Pallas 1786-1789), and in India, by Sir William Jones (1788), among others. In fact, linguistic ethnology became a vastly successful European project of the Enlightenment, bringing about the discovery of widely-dispersed language families such as Indo-European and Malayo-Polynesian, reconfiguring as it did so the deep history of the world by means of the vocabulary list.

Kinship terms figure prominently in such lists. For example, Père G.-L. Cœurdoux, eighteenth-century Jesuit missionary in South India, in his comparison of Sanskrit, Latin and (to a limited extent) Greek cited kinship terms along with other items of the Leibnizian list. Earlier scholars (Christoph Meiners, Gottlieb S. Bayer) had argued that the similarities of Sanskrit, Latin and Greek are due to commerce of the ancients with India or Alexander's military expedition which reached India, and therefore of borrowing from Greek. Cœurdoux mocks the borrowing theory by saying, rightly, that it would require us to believe that Indians had lacked until then terms for fathers, mothers and brothers, and for feet, nose, and teeth (Anquetil-Duperron 1808 : 661; Trautmann 1997 : 54 ; cf. Murr 1987, I : ch. 7) – that is, the kinship terms and words for body parts are equally primitive. The argument is such a good one that Alexander Hamilton, who would have read it while he was teaching Sanskrit in Paris, repeated it (Hamilton 1820). Thus kinship terms figure into one of the first demonstrations of the Indo-European language family – but as elements in a series, or as a list within a collection of lists.

A beautiful and highly effective argument of the same kind was made in the course of a proof establishing the existence of what is now called the Dravidian language family, by Francis W. Ellis and Alexander D. Campbell, in Campbell's grammar of the Telugu language of South India (Ellis 1816 ; Campbell 1816). The two of them reason that the Telugu language, and the other languages of South India, are related to one another, and not to Sanskrit, in spite of the very many Sanskrit loanwords in these languages, because the core vocabulary is similar among the South Indian languages but different from that of Sanskrit. Kinship vocabulary is explicitly a part of the proof. Campbell goes on to give a list of words for kinship in Telugu that identifies some of what we think of as the Dravidian equations, such as FBW=MZ, MBW=FZ, MBS=SpB (Campbell 1816 : 60-61).

So long as kinship terms constituted items in a vocabulary list, however (and they remain so in Campbell), they were captives of an epistemology according to which words are the names of things, in a world of discrete object-types having comparable names in all languages. But once it was grasped that the things of kinship might be categorized under the names of kinship in very different ways from one society to another, one reached the threshold of the anthropological conception of kinship terminology as a system having a logic of its own, comparable to but different from other such terminologies and their logics ; so that now the words of kinship were no longer in series with words for feet, nose and teeth, but constituted a bounded set to be compared with other such sets. This breakthrough understanding came about when Morgan confronted the strangeness of the Iroquois terminology, in which « the father's brother is equally a father », and the mother's sister a mother, implicitly comparing his own kinship terminology – in which the father's brother is an uncle, and the mother's sister an aunt – with that of the Iroquois. An essential step in achieving this new sense of kinship consisting of systems that can be closely compared was to abandon the comparison of vocabulary items, *i.e.* the lexicon of

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kinship, in favor of examining the semantic patterning of the kinship set. Morgan tended to believe that similarity of semantic patterning indicated historical relationship even where the vocabulary of kinship is completely different, *i.e.* across language families. In this way, he believed, kinship could show historical relationships between languages whose vocabularies had so changed over time that they were no longer recognizably alike.

Thus kinship terminology was central to the consolidation of kinship as anthropological object. Because this object was a system or structure, all analysis of this anthropological object necessarily has an incipiently structural, if not a fully-blown structuralist, character ; and it is to structural analysis that we owe most of the great advances in our knowledge of kinship. Lewis H. Morgan himself, though the overall shape of his interpretation is evolutionist, clearly delimited the structure of terminologies we call Iroquois, Crow, Omaha and Eskimo, providing in fact most of the tools of kinship analysis in use ever since. It is not an accident that the two golden ages of the study of kinship, and especially of the study of kinship terminology, had this structural or structuralist aspect – the first following W. H. R. Rivers's revival of Morgan (1914), and the second following the publication of Lévi-Strauss's great masterwork, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949), fittingly dedicated to Morgan, and of Murdock's *Social Structure* (1949).

Critiques of kinship as anthropological object have often had the analysis of kinship terminology in mind, as when Malinowski complained of « kinship algebra » or (so as not to malign algebra, presumably) « the bastard algebra of kinship ». Kinship terminology is no longer automatically included in what anthropologists call kinship, even tacitly. Nevertheless, it remains part of the invaluable ethnographic record which anthropology has made of worlds that have vanished. And some recent works, including the publication of the 1993 Maison Suger conference on kinship terminologies organized by Maurice Godelier (Godelier, Trautmann & Tjon Sie Fat 1998), and Francis Zimmerman's book (1993) that appeared the same year, *Enquête sur la parenté,* suggest that a revival of the study of kinship terminologies is in progress.

India

India weaves in and out of this history. In the first place, India was the site of important breakthroughs in the program of linguistic ethnology, above all the discovery of the Indo-European language family and of the Dravidian language family, in both of which the vocabulary of kinship played a role as part of the larger vocabulary list. In the second place India played a role in the identity which Morgan proposed, the identity Iroquois=Dravidian, by which (as he believed) kinship, his new instrument for discovering historical relationships, showed a common origin where philology had been unable to do so because the vocabularies and grammars of the languages involved were so unlike. If the identity of the two kinship systems were well founded, he argued, it would prove that the American

Indians came from Asia. Over a century later, Floyd G. Lounsbury (1964) showed that the two systems were not identical, and recently Franklin. E. Tjon Sie Fat (1998) – undaunted by Malinowski – has elaborated the algebra of both systems, demonstrating a close structural similarity between them. Morgan was wrong to think that Dravidian and Iroquois are identical, it seems, but not far wrong.

Dravidian is one of the three kinship systems of India, associated with the major language families, Indo-Aryan (in the north, a subset of Indo-European), Dravidian (largely in the south) and Munda (central and eastern, affiliated with the larger Austroasiatic family).

The Dravidian system has occupied a place of special importance in the study of kinship, both for what Louis Dumont called the « crystalline beauty » of the terminological structure and because of the mutual entailment of the Dravidian rule of marriage – what we call cross cousin marriage – and the Dravidian terminology. The linkage between terminology and rules of marriage, which Morgan had unsuccessfully sought, is here clearly in view, as was shown by Dumont in a classic article which examined the Tamil as a type case of the Dravidian, among the many contributions to the sociology of India, and especially South India, for which he will be remembered (Dumont 1953). It seems to be the case, indeed, that most, perhaps all kinship terminologies looked at comparatively show or imply a rule of marriage, while only certain types (Crow, Omaha) bear marks of unilineal descent in their structure. It is not an accident that the study of kinship terminologies benefited from the successes of alliance theory.

The cumulation of studies of particular kinship systems of the Dravidian region of India and the availability of written records (inscriptions, lawbooks, chronicles, epics) going back several millennia make it possible to examine the Dravidian system as a field of variation in space and time, through comparative study of localized instances (Trautmann 1981). Results of such study trace the existence of the Dravidian system in India back well over a thousand years in the written record. Further, the many local cases can be shown to be so many derivatives of a proto-Dravidian system based on bilateral cross cousin marriage, even when – as in the case of the Nayar of Kerala – the terminology has been so transformed that it is no longer recognizably related.

The Dravidian system of India and Sri Lanka gives grounds to believe that the structure of kinship systems may be very enduring and resistant to changes beyond fairly simple transformations of the basic pattern. It is important to be clear that only the structural approach has been able to illuminate this order of facts. While post-structuralist approaches have been valuable in drawing attention to the individually varying, contested and strategic element in kinship systems, such approaches have a weakened concept of shared rules and categories that can easily lead to the false notion that kinship systems (including terminologies) change rapidly and easily, with statistical shifts in behavior. To the extent that the anthropology of kinship remains at the synchronic level and does not take a deep historical perspective on its object of study it may be vulnerable to this error. The Dravidian system shows this is quite wrong. The con-

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servatism of the Dravidian kinship system is so great that one even finds marginal survivals of it among Indian peoples who do not (or probably we should say, who no longer) speak Dravidian languages, such as the Mer of Saurashtra in western India. These people, it is worth pointing out, lie within the orbit of the ancient Indus Civilization, which has often been speculatively linked with the Dravidian languages. The language of the Mer (Gujarati) is of the Indo-Aryan family, but the semantics of their kinship terminology is decidedly Dravidian (Trautmann 1981 : 124-133). In this limited but striking way, Morgan's belief in the greater conservatism of the kinship system over grammar and vocabulary has been vindicated.

Turning from the much-examined Dravidian system to the Indo-Aryan system of India, embracing the vast population of North India, there is much less that we can say. There are, to be sure, very good studies of particular instances, notably those of Sylvia Vatuk (1969) and Raymond Jamous (1991) for certain groups of Hindi-speakers. And there are studies both philological and anthropological of the encompassing Indo-European system, or rather of the ancestral proto-Indo-European (*e.g.* Friedrich 1966 ; Szemerényi 1977). But what we need is to fill the space which lies in between Indo-European kinship in general, and particular north Indian cases, namely, comparative, historical study of the terminologies of speakers of all the modern Indo-Aryan languages of India (and Pakistan and Bangladesh), in their relation to Sanskrit and Prakrit, for which the documentary record is very rich. What we have along these lines was done long ago by Irawati Karve, whose *Kinship Organization in India* (1965), first published in 1953, is still well worth reading.

What we can say of the Indo-Aryan system, using Hindi as type case, is, negatively, that it lacks first, the Dravidian equations that mingle affinal and consanguineal kin, second, the contrast of cross and parallel, and third, the rule of cross cousin marriage as a structuring principle. Positively, the Indo-Aryan system appears to be structured by the opposition of wife-givers and wife-takers, which differentiates the affines of one side from those of the other ; and these are governed by a logic such that a giver of a giver is a giver (GG→G), the taker of a taker is a taker (TT→T), but the giver of a taker or a taker of a giver is a consanguine, *i.e.* a brother or sister (GT→C; TG→C). The regime of marriage implied by the terminology and recorded in the ethnography requires the non-relatedness of bride and groom, and the non-reciprocity of the marriage transaction, which in principle flows from the bride's people to the groom's without return. This logic is theorized in the Sanskrit texts under the rubric of « the gift of a maiden » *(kanyādāna),* under a non-reciprocal notion of religious giving that distinguished itself from secular, reciprocal prestations. India again figured significantly as a site for the formation of anthropological theory, for Mauss had studied the Sanskrit texts on the gift under Sylvain Lévi, and developed a sociological theory of the coerced reciprocity underlying the gift exactly from his study of the brahmin theory and its rejection of secular reciprocity as a basis for the religious gift (Trautmann 1981 : ch. 4).

The Munda system of kinship is the third of the Indian systems, and for it we have the benefit of the excellent comparative work of Robert Parkin (1992), synthesizing many particular studies. Speakers of Munda languages in India are a small minority compared to those of the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian language families, and their kinship system is less influential and more often influenced by the large populations following Indo-Aryan and Dravidian systems among which they live. The Munda system resembles the Dravidian one in distinguishing cross and parallel kin and repeating marriage alliance between groups. But cross cousin marriage is not allowed; all consanguines of ego's generation are called brothers and sisters (the cross/parallel distinction being suppressed in this generation) and there is a separate affinal terminology, much as in Indo-Aryan terminologies. Marriage alliances are, nevertheless, repeated, but only with a one or three generation delay, that is, with more distant (second or fourth) cousins, who are not classed as brother and sister. Both in terminology and in the effect of the marriage rule, which is to push marriage out from the circle of close kin to more distant ones, the Munda system occupies, in Indian terms, a structural middle way between the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian system. Parkin finds two principles underlying the Munda system: alternation of generations (also found in some Dravidian instances of Central India), and the rule of repeated bilateral marriage alliance, bilateral in the sense that alliances may be directly reciprocated rather than being systematically oriented in one direction only, by means of a radical distinction of wife-giving from wife-taking affinal relatives (as in Hindi).

Because of the great durability of the three kinship systems of India they, like the three language families they correlate imperfectly with, are traces of the ancient conjuncture of cultures out of whose meeting Indian civilization as we know it was made. The fact that they remain recognizably distinct under the structures deposited by thousands of years of civilization-building is a striking fact about kinship that will not be reached by studies confining themselves to an ethnographic present. It tells us that in respect of these structures kinship is like language, changeable but shot through with traces of a deep past.

Evolutionism, Structuralism, Historicism

The Dravidian system has, in a sense, a double existence. In the first sense – the one we have been considering so far – it is a particular historic complex found in India and Sri Lanka, associated with a language family of the same name. In the second sense it is a structural type, instances of which are found in many parts of the world without being necessarily related to one another. Dravidian systems are abundant in the Americas, both north and south. Some Americanists have been heard to say, indeed, that there are societies in Amazonia adhering to the Dumontean conception of Dravidian kinship more closely than do the peoples of South India (Anne-Christine Taylor, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, per-

sonal communication). The difference between these two meanings of the Dravidian is parallel to the distinction linguists draw between « genetic » and « typological » classifications of the four or five thousand languages of the world, the genetic classification treating them as unique nodes to be organized into genealogical trees of historic relationship, the typological one tracing global regularities of language structure, such as the order of subject, object and verb, among languages which may not be historically related. This is another way of stating the capital fact that the number of kinship terminology types is a small number, much less than the number of languages and language families, and that they recur again and again in different parts of the world. Systems of Dravidian type are found around the world, but are not evenly distributed, being abundant in Asia and Oceania and the Americas, but not in Europe and Africa.

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What conclusions can we draw from this odd distribution, at once global and patchy ? The ways anthropologists have devised to tackle questions of this kind fall into three classes, which we can call evolutionist, structuralist and historicist, and each has something to say on the question.

Morgan and other early anthropologists proposed evolutionist explanations for the distribution of kinship types, correlating them with economic, political and cultural stages in a progressive series. But the wide range of the Dravidian type, from small, widely-dispersed hunting bands of North America to the densely populated regions practicing irrigation agriculture of the South Indian kingdoms, make it abundantly clear that such correlations are hard to draw and not specially revealing. This is the obverse of our earlier observation about the heterogeneity of the language families making up a unitary civilization of India. Both observations lead to the sense that kinship systems are rather like natural languages in that they are platforms on which many and perhaps all different kinds of economic, political and cultural organization may be built. It is notorious that types of kinship terminology join the Eskimo with the English, the Sudanese with the Chinese. The correlation of kinship types with the means of production has been repeatedly attempted, but the project has not fared well. That is not to say that any kinship type may be found with any economic, political or cultural regime, but linkages, where they exist, appear to be weak at best, and we are well-advised at the present state of knowledge to proceed on the opposite assumption of the lack of significant correlation of kinship with the economy and the political organization.

Very different from that of the nineteenth-century theorists is the evolutionist theory of N. J. Allen, which he calls « tetradic » (1986, 1989). Allen posits an evolutionary starting point for the succession of kinship types very close to Dravidian, that is, one in which the equations combine many genealogical posi-

tions in a very small number of kinship categories, namely four (or eight, taking account of the distinction of the sexes). He proposes that the evolutionary path is unidirectional, toward the breaking apart of the equations (such as MB=FZH=SpF into three separate categories), while the reverse, he argues, is unlikely to occur. Here the evolutionary logic works through the kinship terminology itself, without reference to other levels.

For structuralism explanation is quite different. As we have said, most kinship analysis has a quasi-structuralist aspect, but for structuralism in the full sense the Dravidian system is one expression among many of alliance and its fundamental principle of reciprocity. The recurrence of Dravidian terminologies in distant, non-related societies is to be expected under this interpretation, such traits being surface features corresponding to structures of the mind. It is only by piercing the veil of the empirical level that this structural principle can be found. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1949) has shown how an explanation of this kind can be formulated without falling into Platonic idealism. The ultimate source of such empirical recurrence is not the existence of ideal types but of the hardwiring of the human brain. The recent work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998) on the relation of Dravidian to other systems is an especially good example of how much structuralism continues to offer to the clarification of kinship.

Evolutionism and structuralism work in opposite directions. Evolutionism envisions a logic immanent in history (or, in Allen's tetradic theory, a logic inherent to the kinship system itself) that gives it directionality and irreversability. Structuralism treats history as a restless flow of contingencies upon which the structure of the human mind continually strives to impress its shape. Both can explain, in their different ways, why kinship features of a given type such as Dravidian recur in distant places, but neither accounts for the patchiness and particularity of that global distribution. For evolutionism the historical process everywhere moves in the same direction, for structuralism it is essentially random, being subject to non-general causes. Properly historicist explanations are those that try to assess the kinship patterning of large contiguous regions and to explain different systems in relation to one another, that is, in terms of historical community of origin or of interaction over time. Historicism aspires to explain the lumpiness or unevenness that the symmetries of evolutionism and structuralism leave unexplained, within the horizon of the last few thousand years. Much the greater part of this work remains to be done, in the century to come.

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Thomas R. Trautmann, *India and The Study of Kinship Terminologies*. — The study of kinship terminologies grew out of the eighteenth-century project of linguistic ethnology, which sought to uncover the historical relations among nations by determining the relations among languages, using lists of core vocabulary items including kinship terms. Lewis H. Morgan was the first to conceptualize the kinship terminology as an integrated set. India and the Dravidian kinship terminology have played a large role in the history of kinship study. Most modern advances in the study of kinship terminology are owed to structuralism, though the contributions of evolutionism are not entirely in the past, and those of historicism lie largely in the future.

Thomas R. Trautmann, *L'Inde et l'étude des terminologies de parenté.* — L'étude des terminologies de parenté s'est développée au XVIIIe siècle à partir de l'ethnologie linguistique, laquelle souhaitait découvrir les relations historiques existant entre les nations en étudiant celles entre les langues en se servant de listes de mots du vocabulaire courant comprenant des termes de parenté. Lewis H. Morgan fut le premier à conceptualiser la terminologie de parenté en tant qu'ensemble intégré. L'Inde et la terminologie dravidienne ont joué un rôle important dans l'histoire des études de la parenté. La plupart des avancées actuelles concernant l'étude de la terminologie de parenté sont dues au structuralisme, bien que l'apport de l'évolutionnisme ne soit pas encore dépassé et que celui de l'historicisme reste encore à venir.