

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

Fadwa El Guindi, Ph.D.
Retiree, University of California, Los Angeles
Former Distinguished Professor at Qatar University
Email: felguindi@gmail.com

Dwight Read, Ph.D.
Distinguished Research Professor
Department of Anthropology University of California, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA 90095 USA
Email: dread@ss.ucla.edu

We begin this issue of Kinship with an article that frames the domain of kinship and re-affirms it as a universal category. It is also a critique of the recently published handbook, *The Cambridge Handbook of Kinship*. Though the word “kinship” appears in the title of the handbook without modification, it is, as the title of the introductory chapter by editor Susan Bamford indicates, about “conceiving kinship.” We make evident already determined universal properties that express the boundaries of the kinship domain and the logical properties that universally define the category of kinship.

It was uncovered during the empirical study of ‘suckling’ in the Arabian Gulf that the phrase ‘milk kinship’ which was widely employed in studies is in fact an umbrella for several phenomena that should be of interest in kinship study. There is a vaguely defined notion of ‘adoption’, there is fosterage, there is kinship by breastfeeding, and so on. This needed to be sorted out in the context of approaching milk kinship. Then there is the use and misuse of the term adoption, which means different things in different cultural traditions. There are multiple fathers, and there are multiple mothers, and emergent family forms which need the attention of ethnography and theory of kinship. Taking them out of kinship study and relegating these forms to ‘relatedness’ would eliminate significant implications in kinship study.

The institution and practices of kafala in the Arab world is such a subject. It has been receiving scholarly attention in French anthropology whereas many US anthropologists may not have even heard of it. It is particularly confusing when ‘foreign labor’ is defined by the institution called by the same name, kafala, which translates as guardianship. Yet we find Egypt in its formal documents on kafala with regard to adding orphan children to a family, unrelated to them by birth or marriage, are described by the same term.

The implications for understanding kinship are varied, plenty and deep. Kinship study, for a long time, has been too immersed in a binary kinship incorporation mode by which becoming incorporated as a relative was either by birth or marital union. The recent work on ‘suckling’

has shown that suckling is a mode of incorporation that not only makes one a relative, but can transform from one mode of incorporation into another (see El Guindi's (2018) article, "Turning cousins into siblings"). Kinship study must open its theoretical and ethnographic gates to enhance and allow the findings of new ethnographic research to be incorporated and to reconsider current kinship conceptualization and theory. This is what is exciting about the second article on Algerian *Kafala* published in this issue of *Kinship* in its original French version along with a Word translation into English. (Note that the English translation cannot be cited without permission from the author, Dr. Aicha Benabed).

Readers can read the review by Gene Anderson of the book "Suckling: Kinship More Fluid" by Fadwa El Guindi in this same issue to expand the ethnographic context and reconceptualization of theory in kinship study. Another review, by Luis Costa, is included of the book, *The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives Between Nepal and New York* by Sienna Craig.

The third article, *Yet another view of Trobriand kinship categories, from optimality to conceptual structure* by Doug Jones, presents an alternative to the analysis of the Trobriand kinship terminology provided by Floyd Lounsbury (1966) in his classic article showing, there is a consistent logic for the extension from the core genealogical referents of the Trobriand kin terms to their secondary genealogical referents. The goal of Jones's article is to introduce another way to account for these extensions. He uses linguistic Optimality Theory to order the sequence in which linguistic rules derived from applying Greenberg's notion of markedness (e.g., English *sister-in-law* is the marked form of the English kin term *sister*) are applied to the core referents of a kin term to determine its secondary referents. The rules are derived from dimensions along which marking takes place; e.g., for the dimension Distant/Close for kinship relations, the marked kin term typically expresses a distant kinship relation and an unmarked term expresses a close kinship relation. Jones concludes by noting "that an optimality theoretic treatment provides an economical and elegant account of Trobriand kin terms" and makes evident a connection between matrilineal institutions in the Trobriander social system and its Crow terminology. Jones relates this more broadly with the notion that skewed terminologies occur when there is strong unilineal emphasis, an argument that goes back to (White 1939). To keep kinship debate going, note that a similar conclusion has been reached, but using different approaches, by Ensor (2021) and Read (2021). In other words, using three different approaches leads to the same conclusion. That, in itself, is significant.

The last article, by Robert Parkin, revisits the arguments made by Kohler (1975 [1897]), later taken up by Gifford (1916) and Rivers (1914), that second marriages of a male ego with WFZ, WZ, or WBD would account for the Omaha skewed kinship terminologies. This argument was subsequently discounted due to the infrequency of second marriages, so Parkin's interest is not in terminological implications, but what more recent ethnographic accounts inform us about these second marriages, including societies without a skewed kinship terminology. Parkin's review leads him to posit, for these second marriages, "four situations or paradigms with preferred marriages that correspond logically to one another, though in inverse ways" (this issue, p. 85). Parkin also reviews the argument that the levirate and the sororate could account for these marriages due to similarity between these marriages and the levirate and the sororate. Comments are invited on any or all issues raised.

Kinship is way beyond ‘conceiving.’ It was conceived when evolutionary forces turned us to modern humans through qualitative changes to the brain giving it regenerative capacity. Kinship analysis was born in the 14th century, grew and matured into Kinship Study in the 19th and 20th centuries, and is continually revitalized now and through the 21st century.as kinship research continues. You can keep the kinship debate going. Well-developed comments on any kinship issues are welcome.

References

- El Guindi, F. 2018. Turning cousins into siblings. *Kinship Algebra* (Russian journal of the Russian Academy of Sciences) 16: 184-98.
- Ensor, B. E. 2021. Comment on German Dziebel: Crow-Omaha and the future of kin term research. *Kinship* 1(2): 24-67. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/K71253723>. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/55g8x9t7>.
- Gifford, E. W. 1916. Miwok moieties. *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 12: 186 - 188.
- Kohler, J. 1975 [1897]. *On the Prehistory of Marriage: Totemism, Group Marriage, Mother Right*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lounsbury, F. 1966. Another view of the Trobriand kinship categories. *American Anthropologist* 67 (5, Part 2): 142-185.
- Read, D. 2021. Grandfather becomes a father: Towards a rethinking of the Trobriand kinship terminology. *XIV Congress of Anthropologists and Ethnographers of Russia*, Tomsk, Russia. July 6-9, 2021.
- Rivers, W. H. R. 1914. *Kinship and Social Organization*. London: Constable.
- White, L. A. 1939. A problem in kinship terminology. *American Anthropologist* 41(4): 566-573.