INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is highly synthetic, hence its strengths and its weaknesses. I will attempt to bring the cumulative results of a century and a half of kinship studies in anthropology, into the focus of current debates on the origin of modern humans in Africa, and on an entangled bit of human evolutionary history commonly subsumed under the heading of the “peopling of the Americas.”

My interest in kinship systems was ignited in the early 1990s. Then a student at the Department of Anthropology and Ethnography of St. Petersburg State University, I was writing annual research papers on the various aspects of Northern Shoshone Indian culture with a special reference to primary written sources such as travelers’, mountain men’s, and missionaries’ accounts. When the time came to examine Shoshone kinship structures, I had to consult works in general kinship theory, and it turned out that the type of kinship structure encoded in the Shoshone language has never been theoretically elaborated. From that time onward, I have been a voracious reader of kinship monographs and articles, initially in search for clues for the elegant alternate-generation equations in Shoshone, but also, increasingly, in search of the general laws of kinship terminological structure and change. Anthropological theories heavily depend on their empirical sources. Kinship studies were initially built on kin
terminologies, collected by Lewis H. Morgan during his time among eastern North American Indians (paradigmatically, the Iroquois), and L. H. Morgan’s perspective cast a spell on the way anthropologists have been thinking of kin classifications. Had western North American Indian kin terminologies been introduced into anthropology from the very start, the development of kinship studies very likely would have taken an altogether different route. For the Shoshone, I related their kinship structure to the annual cycles of dispersion and concentration (Dziebel, 1994, 2005b); for the world, I finally put together a set of poorly understood or “anomalous” terminological variants mostly recorded in the Americas, Asia, and Australia into an evolutionary sequence (Dziebel, 2001).

The following discussion is based on a database of some 2500 kinship vocabularies representing roughly 600 African languages, 140 Australian languages, 500 Austronesian languages, 200 Papuan languages, 350 languages of Eurasia (excluding Indo-Europeans), 440 North and Middle American Indian languages, and 200 South American languages. For many of them, several dialectal and temporal variants are available, which makes the actual number of kin terminologies in the sample even greater. Indo-European (IE) kin terminologies were not included in the count, since the richness of historical sources and the thoroughness of our knowledge of IE historical phonology places etymological minutae, rather than global comparison, into the focus of kin terminological research within this language family. Alternatively, the diversification of IE languages has little bearing on either the “out-of-Africa” model of human dispersals or the “peopling of the Americas.”

Nearly all possible sources were consulted, including many of the unpublished M.A. and Ph.D. theses, and a comprehensive bibliography of kinship terminological sources and kinship studies in anthropology and linguistics in English, French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, and Lithuanian languages emerged as a by-product of the database composition. Russian sources were actively utilized for such areas as Europe, Siberia, Southeast Asia, and Africa, and a
bibliography of kinship studies in the Russian language can be found in Dziebel (1998). Counting Indo-European, almost half of the world’s languages have been studied well enough by anthropologists and linguists to furnish meaningful information about the structures of their kinship vocabularies. All world provinces are well represented in the sample, but, as always, South America and Papua New Guinea are lagging behind. More information on Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo, Afroasiatic, Austroasiatic, Tai-Kadai, and Sino-Tibetan kinship terminologies is also desirable. Murdock’s earlier attempt at an overall classification of kin terminological patterns on the basis of 800 was of enormous help, but, naturally enough, his research is outdated in its scope and methodology, and moreover it is largely synchronic in its intent.\(^2\)

Priority has been accorded to specialized publications which contained ostensibly complete kinship nomenclatures, but wordlists were utilized too if they seemed to contain enough information to type a rare kinship terminology according to one of the two parameters: sibling classification and intergenerational equations. These two parameters were selected for the following reasons. Sibling nomenclatures were demonstrated to possess remarkable qualities of stability and predictable evolution through the progressive neutralization of binary distinctions. Intergenerational equations (self-reciprocal terms, “Crow-Omaha” systems, etc.) have never been studied as a set of interrelated terminological phenomena, and the worldwide information on their distribution is limited. The database was also screened for classical typological markers defined by the bifurcation and merging of “horizontal” categories to the effect that additional combinations, previously unnoticed, were observed. Affinal equations defining the transition from elementary to complex alliance structures were taken into consideration as well, but here I found nothing to complement or modify the extant typological generalizations. Finally, the formal features of the grammar of kin terms and kin terminologies (reduplication, descriptivity, suppletivity, verbal and nominal components, etc.), were also processed, although with insufficient completeness. Presently, therefore, the global diversity
of kin terminological patterns can be described as the intersection of the following parameters: affinal equations, bifurcation and merging of “horizontal” categories, sibling nomenclature, cross-generational equations, and grammatical principles. While our knowledge of these aspects of kin classification is uneven and naturally incomplete, it seems that these parameters exhaust the cognitive-linguistic variation of human kinship systems.

In the following, I will take the reader to the dawn of kinship studies in the 19th-century Western science, in order to elicit the wider context of anthropological interest in kinship systems and the interdisciplinary salience of the phenomenon of kinship. As my point of departure, I will focus on the founder of kinship studies in anthropology, American lawyer and Iroquois ethnographer, Lewis Henry Morgan, and the circumstances of his life that generated his interest in human kinship. From this micro-historical jumping board, I will venture into the intricacies of scientific and quasi-scientific debates in the 19th century. I will treat 19th-century science as embedded in a myth featuring divinity, humanity, and animality as principle characters. My account is divided into four sections each of which is structured as a triad (philosophy, psychology, and physiology; logic, semiotics, and reproduction; religion, hermeneutics, and evolution; law, grammar, and speech) representing the three characters in the myth of 19th-century science. This far-reaching historical journey will enable us to formulate an idea of what human kinship might be all about, especially in the light of the widespread uncertainties about this question, caused by the constructivist turn in anthropology. It will also identify the set of problems with the existing formulations of human origins, which directly reflect the founding logical difficulties inherent in the 19th-century myth.

I will skip a recapitulation of basic kinship theory and reduce to a minimum the historiography of kinship studies in the 20th century. Extensive accounts can be found in several well-known summaries (see, e.g., Barnard & Good, 1984; Buchler & Selby, 1968; Harris, 1969; Keesing, 1975a; E. Müller, 1981; Parkin, 1997; Schusky, 1965).
A short account of diffusionism, British structural functionalism, French structuralism, and American (Boasian) ethnolinguistic formalism and historical materialism will be complemented by an overview of approaches to kinship in 20th-century linguistics, psychology, and biology.

After this in-depth theoretical historiography, I will spend some time defining the characteristic features of kin terms as part of language, and justify their use for the study of human prehistory. This will be followed by a report on the basic historico-typological findings. Finally, I will suggest implications of the patterns of kin terminological diversity and evolution for the burgeoning debates in population genetics, archaeology, palaeobiology, and linguistics on the geographical origin of modern humans and the geographical and temporal origins of American Indians. My book published in Russian (Dziebel, 2001) is broader in its scope and more detailed, but also outdated in some of its typological interpretations and is based on a smaller database of 1000 kin terminologies. My overall methodological stance is a passionate balance between constructivist (postmodernist) and positivist approaches to the social sciences. Since its inception in the late-1960s, once-vibrant constructivism has deteriorated into an essentialist account of current cultural politics and legal battles of representation. In the meantime, positivism reinvigorated itself through informational technologies, massive databases, and the sophisticated models of cognitive and linguistic rules. It is time for these two grand visions of human reality to come to terms with each other.
1. Bibliography and Database. Only some of the literature utilized for the present study made it into References. For a full bibliography, see my Web site www.kinshipstudies.org. The Web site also contains a database in Excel format in which the actual lexemes are reproduced. Abbreviations. Abbreviations for kin types are standard (see A. Barnard & Good, 1984): F “father,” M “mother,” B “brother,” Z “sister,” S “son,” D “daughter,” W “wife,” H “husband,” Sb “sibling,” o “older,” y “younger,” m “male,” f “female,” St “step-.” The string FoBDy reads “father’s older brother’s daughter younger than Ego”; the string mPxSibS is “the son of father’s sister or mother’s brother for male Ego,” or “bilateral cross-cousin for male Ego.”

2. For a bibliography of Murdock’s oeuvre spanning 4 decades, see Donohue (1985).
THE GENIUS OF KINSHIP
PART I

THE PHENOMENON OF KINSHIP: UNEARTHING THE ROOTS OF RELATIONAL THINKING IN 19TH-CENTURY THOUGHT
In anthropological textbooks, the inception of kinship research is invariably attributed to Lewis H. Morgan, the author of *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1871) and several earlier reports (see L. H. Morgan, 1847a, 1858, 1859, 1860a, 1868b). In Europe, L. H. Morgan’s works were received coldly. In the United States, L. H. Morgan found a devoted follower, John W. Powell, the head of the Bureau of Ethnology. Powell published several short articles on kinship, mainly popularizing L. H. Morgan’s findings (see Powell, 1884a, 1884b, 1884c, 1885), and an appreciation of L. H. Morgan’s contributions to ethnology (Powell, 1881). For a long time, L. H. Morgan’s significance for anthropology was assessed on the basis of his narrowly ethnological monographs. Consequently, he became an “evolutionist” *par excellence*. The full scope of his intellectual engagement with anthropology, linguistics, law, geology, and animal psychology was left under-appreciated. In addition, the complexity
of his personal investment in the matters of consanguinity, family
genealogy, affinity, death, religion, Indian antiquities, and American
nationalism has until recently remained virtually unknown. Semi-
nal out-of-archives contributions to the deciphering of the mystery
behind the “father” of American anthropology have been made by
Trautmann (1987), Carnes (1989), Deloria (1998), and Feeley-Harnik

Born in upstate New York, Lewis Henry Morgan lost his father,
Jedediah Morgan, at the age of 8 and was raised by his mother and
older sister. Even in his middle age, he believed that a “child is never
ready to part with a parent” (Carnes, 1988, p. 96). Later, the adult
L. H. Morgan would advance a famous hypothesis, which proposed
that the primitive systems of kinship classification—as exemplified
by the Iroquois American Indians, which involve the classification
of father with the father’s brother—were geared to an ancient state
of sexual promiscuity in which the biological father of the child was
unknown. J. Morgan was Worshipful Master of the Scipio Masonic
lodge and High Priest of the Aurora chapter of the Royal Arch
Masons. As a young man, L. H. Morgan attempted to regenerate the
paternal bonds by continuing his father’s involvement in Masonic
activities. He presided over a fraternity called “The Gordian Knot”
that was devoted to the study of Greek antiquities. Feeling the dis-
connect between ancient Greece and modern America, L. H. Morgan
soon renamed the fraternity the “Grand Order of the Iroquois” and
directed its activities toward research into Native American antiq-
quities, ethnic cross-dressing (“cultural transvestism,” or “ethnic drag”),
and the reenactment of Indian rituals. In so doing, L. H. Morgan
adopted the Iroquois as the ancestors of white Americans and gave
the nascent American national consciousness a Native American
pedigree (Deloria, 1998). The initiate into the Grand Order of the Iro-
quois went through the ritual of “Inindianation”; he was conceived of
as a “captive,” who had wandered so long among the palefaces that
he had “lost nearly every trace of his parentage and descent” (Carnes,

One day L. H. Morgan befriended an acculturated Iroquois, Ely S.
Parker, whom he had met at a local bookstore. Parker became his
guide into the life of real Iroquois, and a collaborator on his project of authoring the first scientific description of an American Indian tribe. The Iroquois extended their kinship to L. H. Morgan, making him an adopted member of the Turtle clan of the Seneca nation. L. H. Morgan was thoroughly impressed by the cultural saliency and political effectiveness of kinship ties among the Iroquois (L. H. Morgan, 1847b, p. 178). He came to recognize that the ties of kinship were an invariant of human life, compatible with any level of societal complexity.

Along with rubbing shoulders with an Iroquois, L. H. Morgan also sustained a friendship with a wholly different sort of man, the minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Rochester, Joshua H. McIlvaine. A student of Sanskrit, a member of the American Oriental Society, and a professor of Belles-lettres at Princeton University (at that time, the College of New Jersey), McIlvaine influenced L. H. Morgan in his philological, theological, and evolutionary interests and recommended the manuscript of *The Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* for publication. In fact, as Trautmann (1984, 1987) showed, it was the minister who proposed the explanation of the forms of kinship as deriving from the evolution of the forms of marriage from primitive promiscuity to monogamy. McIlvaine also discovered the rule of cross-cousin marriage among the Tamil, which he thought was an intermediary form between the two poles of matrimonial evolution. This rule was absent among L. H. Morgan’s Iroquois, which created certain differences between Tamil and Iroquois kin classifications. While McIlvaine was hardwired to study moral evolution by his Christian beliefs, L. H. Morgan was originally more prepared to see the diversity of kin terminologies as a function of population history rather than developmental stages. The worldwide networks of kin terms reminded him more of the networks of beaver huts spread across North America.

At the time of L. H. Morgan’s invention of kinship, Protestant theology and practice in America was undergoing a major shift known as the Second Great Awakening. New Christian enthusiasm emanated from McIlvaine, on the one hand, and Morgan’s own wife, Mary Elizabeth Steele, on the other. L. H. Morgan married Steele in 1851, but they had known each other since they were children, for
Steele was L. H. Morgan’s first cousin, namely the daughter of his mother’s brother. Feeley-Harnik (2001b, pp. 148–149) noted Steele’s high level of religious education and detected a conflict between her ardent religiosity and L. H. Morgan’s scientific vigor. Both Steele and McIlvaine were concerned with the declining significance of religion and the necessity to strengthen and revive the original power of primitive Christianity. They saw that centuries of missionary work had depleted the vitality of Christians and made them susceptible to the dangers of miscegenation. In their eyes, L. H. Morgan with his kinship researches was a vehicle of Christian revivalism, for now it was possible to see the workings of the divine will in the material process of human moral evolution (cf., Feeley-Harnik, 2001b, p. 149). McIlvaine’s view of human history as developing from promiscuity to monogamy may well have been a response to certain trends in American religious revivalism such as Cochranism and Mormonism that promoted sexual freedom, “spiritual wifery,” and polygamy. Alternatively L. H. Morgan, done with his youthful attachment to ancient Greek culture, was more and more interested in the natural and cultural delights offered by the new continent as well as in a new mode of thought coming from Europe and called “science.” L. H. Morgan turned his back to McIlvaine’s discovery of cross-cousin marriage because he himself was married to his first cousin and also because he believed that the similarities between Dravidian and Iroquois kin terminologies signaled the Asiatic origin of American Indians.

In the meantime, L. H. Morgan’s cousin, Nathaniel Morgan, was concerned with the declining significance of kinship in civilized societies, and he made his contribution to solidifying kinship ideology by compiling a genealogy of his Morgan lineage from the first Welsh settler in the New World, James Morgan (see N. Morgan, 1869). Initially, N. Morgan was dubious about L. H. Morgan belonging to their stock, but the founder of kinship studies “charged resolutely and gallantly through all my defences, turned my own ample store of gathered facts and circumstances fairly against myself, and succeeded, not only with convincing, but demonstrative evidence in establishing his clear right by lineal descent, to his present place in our family camp”
The Invention of Lewis H. Morgan...

(N. Morgan, 1869, p. 179). By the time of the dispute, L. H. Morgan had just submitted his book to the Smithsonian Institution Press.

The founder of kinship studies dedicated his magnum opus to his two daughters, Mary and Helen Morgan, who both died of scarlet fever in 1862. A bereaved L. H. Morgan felt that it was the writing of the book that had took his attention away from the health needs of his children. His daughters were his co-authors in writing the blood-filled history of “human families,” and the book was his father’s solemn offering on their tomb. L. H. Morgan designed his daughters’ stone coffins as well as the family mausoleum. He knew that intelligent communication is deeper and older than human speech; hence, he believed that his daughters’ spirits stayed in touch with him. Although Spiritualism was gaining momentum in the state of New York, L. H. Morgan had his own religion to follow. In accordance with the intimate ethics of his Iroquois friends, all of L. H. Morgan’s books were dedicated to close friends and family, suggesting that the books were part and parcel of the author’s system of relationships (Feeley-Harnik, 1999, pp. 253–254).

While Trautmann, Feeley-Harnik, and Deloria have unearthed a wealth of relevant information on the complex knot involving life and science in the phenomenon of L. H. Morgan, they stopped short of elucidating all the facets of the Zeitgeist that invented L. H. Morgan himself. For instance, Trautmann’s analysis implies that the discovery of the Iroquois system of kinship naturally led to the invention of kinship as a generic subject matter. The simple evolution from empirical observation to theory leaves out the origin of a necessity, by which kinship was constructed as an object of knowledge. Trautmann overlooks the existence of a broader trend in the social and natural sciences toward relational accounts of their subject matters. Paying due heed to the influence of historical linguistics on L. H. Morgan’s kinship project, Trautmann does not see the connection between the idea of linguistic kinship as such, as pioneered by Franz Bopp, August Pott, and others in Germany, and the idea of human kinship as introduced by L. H. Morgan. Another overlooked source of L. H. Morgan’s kinship studies is the phenomenon of genius
that fascinated European philosophers since the Renaissance era. Both Trautmann and Feeley-Harnik insightfully detect a connection between science and religion in L. H. Morgan’s life (mainly through the medium of his close friend, Rev. McIlvaine), but they do not go as far as placing L. H. Morgan’s interest in kinship in a broader context of the transformation of Christian practice in Europe and the United States.

The 19th century, the age of scientific discoveries and inventions, generated a whole nest of explorations into the phenomenon of relationality coherent in their underlying objective to unearth the logic behind the continuity, reproduction and transmission of life-forms. L. H. Morgan’s life and works profoundly express the interdisciplinary complexity and existential significance of the phenomenon of kinship. Kinship studies were begotten in the atmosphere of severe existential constraints. L. H. Morgan’s family came to occupy the lands once belonging to a dwindling minority. Young L. H. Morgan dressed like an Iroquois and co-opted his peers into a new “order of the Iroquois,” while the Iroquois used to dress like local animals and assume animal names as the titles of their clans. As a lawyer, L. H. Morgan defended the Native Americans’ right to their lands and they adopted him into their ranks. L. H. Morgan lost his father when he was a child and his two daughters when they were still children. He began his research and community-building in the memory of his father, and he ended up blaming the death of his daughters on his agitated book writing. He was married to his first cousin. His wife and best friend were deeply religious, while he himself was zealously scientific. An evolutionary model firmly associated in the history of science with his name originated in the mind of his Presbyterian minister friend, while his own ideas about geology, animal psychology, totemism, and national consciousness put Darwinism on its head but have remained largely hidden from the public eye. Finally, he self-consciously belonged to a specific Morgan lineage whose profile was identified in all details by his remote cousin. L. H. Morgan’s “bounded rationality,” therefore, mysteriously mirrored and serendipitously fed into his unswerving focus on human kinship.