

kurse zu jener "hohen Welthaltigkeit" bei, die die Herausgeber als einen der charakteristischen Wesenszüge der zeitgenössischen Ethnologie ausmachen, andererseits lässt sich die intendierte Standortbestimmung der Disziplin zu Beginn des 21. Jh.s tatsächlich kaum leisten, ohne den Blick auch darauf zu richten, wie sie wurde, wie sie ist. Jenseits des Anekdotischen wird dies in dem Band insbesondere in den akribisch recherchierten Beiträgen von Bollig und Haller geleistet, die dabei durchaus Überraschendes zu Geschichte und Gegenwart des Faches zu Tage fördern. Wer hätte etwa gedacht, dass das Gesicht einer Disziplin, die lange Zeit von Männern mit Bärten geprägt wurde, heute mehrheitlich ein weibliches ist? In Mittelbau und Studierendenschaft sind Männer heute in deutlich geringerer Zahl zu finden als Frauen. Auf professoraler Ebene behaupten sie (noch) eine knappe Mehrheit. Auch hier liegt jedoch der Anteil von Professorinnen mit 43 % deutlich über dem Schnitt anderer Fächer.

Wollte man sich in kleinlichem Provinzialismus ergehen, könnte man einwenden, dass das Rhein-Main-Gebiet in dem Band deutlich überrepräsentiert ist (7 von 14 Beiträgen kommen aus Mainz oder Frankfurt); dass viele der großen ethnologischen Institute (Berlin, München, Bayreuth) ebenso wenig mit Beiträgen vertreten sind wie die Mehrzahl der Institute mittlerer und geringer Größe. Auch könnte man bemängeln, dass sozialwissenschaftlichen Auslegungen des Faches deutlich mehr Platz eingeräumt wird als kulturwissenschaftlichen, oder dass bei allen Bekenntnissen zum relationalen Status von Fremdheit diese am Ende doch mehrheitlich wieder als (quasi-ontologische) Eigenschaft geografisch weit entfernter Weltgegenden rekonstruiert wird. Eine solche Kritik aber wäre der Intention und Qualität des Bandes wenig angemessen.

Alles in allem nämlich ist es Thomas Bierschenk, Matthias Krings und Carola Lentz tatsächlich gelungen, eine außergewöhnlich spannende Mischung von Positionen und Meinungen zusammenzustellen, die die Vielfalt ethnologischer Perspektiven auf die Welt des 21. Jh.s vielleicht nicht repräsentativ abbildet, aber doch in Umrissen erahnen lässt. Anders als in vielen Standortbestimmungen der 80er und 90er Jahre wurde dabei auf eine systematische Sortierung der Beiträge unter theorieschweren Überschriften verzichtet. Auch eine einleitende inhaltliche Zusammenfassung der einzelnen Kapitel sucht man vergebens. Stattdessen wurden in die Aufsätze selbst zahlreiche Querverweise auf andere Teile des Bandes eingearbeitet. Das lädt dazu ein, den Band weniger selektiv zu lesen, als es bei den meisten Sammelwerken dieser Art der Fall ist. Man tut dies mit großem Gewinn. Denn bei aller Disparität entsteht so am Ende doch das Bild einer Disziplin, die sich, ihrem häufig verkündeten drohenden Ende zum Trotz, quicklebendig und beschwingt den Herausforderungen der Gegenwart stellt.

Thomas Reinhardt

Bittles, Alan H.: *Consanguinity in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 328 pp. ISBN 978-0-5217-8186-2. (Cambridge Studies in Biological and Evolutionary Anthropology, 63). Price: \$ 105.00

The more complex and the more contested a topic the more urgent the need for a comprehensive and accessible book that clarifies matters. Alan Bittles' monograph on the enduringly controversial issue of consanguinity provides a commendable example of a summarizing critical reading of a multitude of relevant studies. From the perspective of a distinguished geneticist, the author creates a fruitful dialogue between genetic and sociocultural perspectives on intrafamilial marriage, a practice stigmatized and banned in some parts of the world while regarded as desirable and widely practiced in others. In Western contexts, thus the departing point, consanguineous marriage is often discussed and presented in a negative manner and thus the book aims at redressing this imbalance by providing "an appropriately extensive framework of information within which the subject can be rationally and dispassionately evaluated" (12).

In contrast to the predominant stereotype, which considers close inbreeding as restricted to geographical, social, and religious isolates, "more than 1100 million people live in countries where 20→50% of marriages are between couples related as second cousins or closer". This results in "some 10.4% of the 7.0 billion global population (being) married to a biological relative" (58). Social and economic advantages of such unions have particularly been identified in Middle Eastern and South Asian populations. In many parts of the world, religious attitudes exert an influence on marriage practices and, to a lesser extent, civil legislation. Consanguineous marriage is permitted – in various types, with varying prevalence, and modifications through time – within Judaism, in some branches of Christianity, Islam, Dravidian Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and the Zoroastrian/Parsi religion (13). Religion also dominates the sphere of sanctions, in Western societies too, while civil legislation in general is limited to the prohibition of incestuous relationships; only China, Taiwan, both Koreas, the Philippines, and some of the United States banned first-cousin unions by law (31–39).

Scientific and medical opinion on consanguinity gained weight in the latter half of the 19th century. Bittles untangles the history of this discussion, which had led to an overconcentration on adverse health issues of consanguineous unions, focused on particular groups and religious communities, and thereby had often overlooked the widespread multigenerational intra-familial unions of European royalty and well-to-do families such as the Rothschilds. Renowned figures such as Charles Darwin and Lewis Henry Morgan were married to their first cousins but became convinced of disadvantages of consanguineous unions. Due to his offspring's unfortunate fate, Morgan even became a vigorous opponent of close kin marriage and Bittles speculates that this distinguished scholar's view might have had some influence on the prevailing legislation of some US states limiting or banning first-cousin marriages (44).

Since the late 19th century research focused on the health outcomes of consanguinity and demonstrated that "the progeny of consanguineous parents are at a greater *average* risk of an adverse health outcome than their

non-consanguineous peers” (226). Bittles applies a general critique to this prevalent research and publication bias on health-adherence aspects of consanguineous unions, the design of such studies and their modes of data collection. Moreover, he contextualizes this somewhat additional 7% morbidity and mortality in consanguinity with Down’s syndrome and fetal alcohol syndrome and thus questions the ethical point of view for calls for legislative prohibition of first-cousin unions (227–229): The risk of conceiving a child with Down’s syndrome increases with maternal age, to 10% by the age of 49. Fetal alcohol syndrome is caused by maternal alcohol consumption during pregnancy and results in various severe physical and neurological problems. An estimated 2% of pregnancies are affected in the USA, more than 6% in South Africa.

Anyhow, due to the complexity of the concept of inbreeding in genetics, consanguinity is basically of limited significance in explaining the prevalence of certain diseases in a population. Because, in addition to relationships between biological relatives, inbreeding comprises genetic drift and the founder effect, positive and negative assortative mating, community endogamy, and the subdivision into isolated groups (78). In consequence, rather than operating with inbreeding and outbreeding as separate and opposite reproductive strategies, human mating should be considered as a genetic continuum that ranges across random mating, positive assortative mating (within geographically, generational, religious, educational, or socioeconomically defined groups), endogamous marriage (preferential or obligatory between descendants of a common ancestor), and consanguineous marriage (in which the partners share a close biological ancestry within the preceding two to three generations) (5f.).

In addition to adjusting risk percentages and clarifying terminology regarding consanguinity, Bittles points to a problematic application of conclusions drawn from studies in nonhuman species, to the widespread overlooking of nongenetic factors, and to the fact that our understanding of the human genome and its expression is still limited; even investigations into epigenetic mechanisms are in their early stages. Above all, he argues, any discussion of the genetic burden of inbreeding depression might soon be balanced out by the global epidemiological transition from a communicable to noncommunicable disease profile (111). Today, intra-familial marriage is on a general decline. Social change, increased mobility, and female education advancement are some of the contemporary powerful additional influences on marriage choices. Less clear for the author, however, is the influence of currently increasing levels of religious fundamentalism.

In this book, Bittles has critically consulted and assembled medical, scientific, legal, demographic, genetic, social, socioeconomic, public, gender-sensitive, and customary opinions on consanguineous marriage. The resulting volume comprises 15 chapters unfolding the history, prevalence, and effects of close kin mating, a comprehensive reference section, an index, and illustrative tables and figures. Though a list of abbreviations and a glossary would have even increased its accessibility, “Consanguinity in Context,” in general, is a rich, well-structured, well-

written, convincing, and in many details astonishing book recommendable for students as well as for scholarly work.

Eva-Maria Knoll

Boissevain, Jeremy: *Factions, Friends, and Feasts. Anthropological Perspectives on the Mediterranean.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2013. 310 pp. ISBN 978-0-85745-844-5. Price: \$ 95.00

This volume consists of an enormously rich collection of 15 essays carefully chosen by the author – one of the contemporary masters of the anthropology of southern Europe – from the substantial library of his own work on aspects of politics, economics, society, and culture in the Mediterranean. The author’s introduction incisively draws out the coherence of the collection as a whole and guides the reader through works he has published over the course of five decades of engagement with the region. Given Jeremy Boissevain’s long and close association with the island it is no surprise that Malta is one of the focal points of the book, but the volume also contains detailed descriptions and analyses of a southern Sicilian town and the Italian diaspora community in Montreal as well as reflections on the Mediterranean region itself. Moreover, the wide-ranging ethnographic substance of the book is underscored by a highly significant contribution to a central aspect of anthropological theory that has preoccupied Boissevain from the early days of his training in social anthropology at the LSE, namely, the limitations of structural functionalism as an approach to society and politics not only in and of the Mediterranean itself but also in more general terms. He argues that the contemporary legacies of structural functionalism (an approach that he suggests that has been adopted uncritically by several generations of social anthropologists following the work of Evans-Pritchard and Radcliffe Brown) are simply incapable of dealing with such phenomena as the sociopolitical impacts of actions by networks of friends and allies that both routinely constitute the “factions” of the volume’s title and also are staple fare of the social life in and of the Mediterranean. Boissevain suggests that the relationship between structure and agency is a fundamental one and only by getting down to the quotidian detail of the latter – specifically in the form of questions about who forms networks of alliances, friendships, and factions – and when, why, and under what contexts they do this – may central aspects of the political dynamics of social life be properly appreciated.

The individual chapters cover a variety of aspects and dimensions of Mediterranean society. There is an early (originally 1964) account of political processes in Farrug, the Maltese village in which the author conducted his first anthropological field research. The chapter is a precursor to later fully-fledged ethnographic (Boissevain, *Saints and Fireworks. Religion and Politics in Rural Malta.* London 1965; Hal Farrug, *A Village in Malta.* New York 1969) and theoretical (Friends of Friends. *Networks, Manipulators, and Coalitions.* Oxford 1974) volumes on the uses of the ideas of network, party, and faction in the understanding of political processes in the region. There follows an