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Q2(b)

How did Morgan explain the evolution of marriage, family and Socio-Political organization, and how did other evolutionists disagree with his explanation?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Anthropology GS 1 · 20 marks · Classical evolutionism (Tylor, Morgan and Frazer)

(a) Classical evolutionism (Tylor, Morgan and Frazer)

Core demand of the question

- How did **Morgan** explain the evolution of marriage, family and Socio-Political organization, and how did other evolutionists disagree with his explanation?
- Write about 250 words for 20 marks

Revision summary

Morgan sequenced family from promiscuity to monogamy with property.

Socio-political order ran gens to tribe to territorial state.

Savagery-barbarism-civilisation was invention-marked.

McLennan, Maine, Bachofen, and Tylor kept evolution but not his rungs.

Boas and **Lowie** rejected unilinear necessity.

Introduction

Lewis Henry **Morgan**, in *Ancient Society*, lined up family and polity on one ladder from savagery to civilisation. Other evolutionists kept the ladder idea but moved the rungs.

Body

Morgan's sequence

- He used Iroquois kinship and classical texts. Kin terms were fossils of older marriage.
- Family ran from promiscuity through **group marriage**, **punaluan**, **pairing**, and **monogamy**, tied to property.
- Polity ran from **gens** (clan) to **phratry**, tribe, and the state of property and territory, as in Rome and Greece.
- **Savagery**, **barbarism**, and **civilisation** were marked by inventions: fire, bow, pottery, agriculture, iron, writing.

Disagreements among evolutionists

- **McLennan** put bride-capture and female infanticide first, and doubted **Morgan's** group marriage as a real stage.
- **Lubbock** and **Spencer** kept progress but stressed religion or military-industrial types more than gens.

- **Bachofen** had already put mother-right first. **Morgan** used matriliney as an early gens, which **Maine** patriarchy contradicted.
- **Tylor** shared unilinear culture but worked from animism and survivals, not from Iroquois terms as law.
- **Engels** accepted **Morgan** and tied the monogamous family to private property. That political use later drew ethnographic fire.

Later evolutionary critique

- **Boas** and **Lowie** showed clans, states, and marriage forms do not travel in one world order.
- **Maine's** status-to-contract still differed: Roman law, not Iroquois, was his engine.
- Field cases of Australian sections and African states broke the single gens-to-state story.

Flow diagram

Morgan Ancient Society -> Family stages

Morgan Ancient Society -> Gens to state

McLennan Maine Tylor -> Other rungs

Boas Lowie -> No one ladder

Conclusion

Morgan joined family, property, and the state on one invention-marked ladder. Fellow evolutionists disputed group marriage, mother-right, and the gens as universal rungs, while Boasians later dropped the ladder.

Facts & figures

Morgan

Ancient Society (1877) and Systems of Consanguinity used Iroquois terms as historical evidence.

McLennan

Primitive Marriage stressed capture and exogamy, not Morgan's punaluan household.

Engels

The Origin of the Family used Morgan to link monogamy and the state to private property.

Lowie

Showed that political centralisation and clan systems do not appear in a fixed world order.

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