

TRANSREGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES: EUROPEAN KINSHIP IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Workshop at the GHI, January 25–27, 2008. Conveners: Christopher Johnson (Wayne State University), Gisela Mettele (GHI/University of Leicester), David Warren Sabean (UCLA), Simon Teuscher (University of Zurich), Francesca Trivellato (Yale University). Participants: Christina Antenhofer (University of Innsbruck), Vivian Berghahn (CUNY Graduate Center), Mary Chamberlain (Oxford Brookes University), Michaela Hohkamp (Free University, Berlin), Uwe Israel (Deutsches Studienzentrum in Venedig), Stéphanie Latte Abdallah (IREMAM/CNRS), Jose Moya (Barnard College), Christine Philliou (Columbia University), Gabriel Piterburg (UCLA), Ruxhsana Qamber (Quaid-i-Azam University), Jonathan Spangler (University of Gloucestershire), Dorothee Wierling (Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte, Hamburg).

This workshop was a follow-up conference to a series of six sessions at the European Social Science History Conference, held in Amsterdam in 2006, devoted to the dynamics of families and kinship groups dispersed over wide and not-so-wide geographical areas that continued to maintain intense interactions with one another. Most of the papers dealt with the experiences of Europe or Europeans, but there were also papers providing comparative perspectives to shed new light on political, social, and cultural processes of modernization. Interactive dispersed families are by no means a phenomenon to first emerge in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and many of the findings of the panelists contradict the dominant narratives of modernization. And “transnational families,” paradoxically, are to be found long before the nation-state was in place. The workshop was designed to bring together a selection from the Amsterdam conference, adding a few papers to open up new questions, in order to put together a volume for publication. The discussion centered around three issues: authority, hierarchy and power; succession and inheritance, the circulation of property, and inter- and intra-generational forms of mediation; and patterned, structured, and systemic aspects of kinship.

Current discussions of ethnic, trade, and commercial diasporas, “circulation” (Markovits), international or global networks, and transnational communities make constant reference to the importance of families and kinship groups for understanding the dynamics of dispersion. Few of the studies, however, examined the nature of these families in any detail. Although there were significant beginnings for long-term comparative analysis, certain crucial issues have not readily been taken into consideration. For example, much can be learned for the study of cross-national

families, as Christopher Johnson has shown, from the study of an early nineteenth-century Breton family. Most observers would consider the history of the families Johnson is dealing with as circumscribed by the national context of France. Yet France had a long way to go to integrate the nation, and the Breton elites of Johnson's study showed a remarkable talent for solidifying their position in a home territory while sending out feelers to Paris and other parts of France, creating regular patterns of exchange, reciprocity, and networking through commercial, professional, political, social, and marital ties. During most of the nineteenth century, mobile German families, even when they confined themselves within the German linguistic area, were networking across states with quite different political and social structures. Whether this kind of transregional family cohesion within dispersion can be usefully compared with the global networks of Gujaratis (Markovits) or Yemeni (Bang) expansion along the East African coast, to offer a few well-known examples, remains to be seen. But they do suggest fundamental questions about the role of kinship in pooling capital, constructing political networks, and developing connections between geographically close and geographically remote areas. From the outset, a perspective of microanalysis seems to offer the best methodological approach to deepening our understanding of trading success, the development of political cultures that both transcend and strengthen the nation-state, and the processes of cultural transfer.

Gabi Piterberg's paper, "Ottoman Political Households and Networks of Elites: Does Kinship Matter?" dealt with an essential issue that has exercised the study of court societies in Europe, namely the building of networks of elites that cooperate with the ruling house. In Piterberg's account, military-patronage states between 1100 and 1800 were characterized by the attempt to rule through one set of generational elites who were not allowed to strike down roots in the societies they ruled. At the center of the Egyptian mamluk household were two kinds of relationships: between master and slaves and among the generations of slaves themselves. With time, slaves were manumitted and expected to take ruling positions themselves, while maintaining loyalty to the house they came from. There are certain similarities with early modern European social relations, whereby patron/client relations could connect two generations without kinship playing a direct role. European courts functioned in some ways similarly to the mamluk households in that their purpose was to build "friends" through personal contact, together with ties of service, loyalty, and patronage. What, of course, gave continuity to the European court were lineage constructs, together with the succession to title and the inheritance of property. And property itself needs to be seen as a bundle of rights and privileges that could involve overlapping use rights and a kaleidoscopic shifting around of holdings.

Christina Antenhofer's paper, "From Local 'Signori' to European High Nobility: The Gonzaga Family Networks in the Fifteenth Century," studied the systematic coordination of a noble family and examined in detail networks constructed through women and younger sons. She traced the rise of the Gonzagas from their rural origins to their attaining a Duchy, from their competitive familial politics to the establishment of primogeniture. She made a clear distinction between inheritance and succession, showing how the devolution of different kinds of goods and honors played a role in familial coordination and conflict. Over time, new forms of authority developed in the kinship group, with increasingly patterned forms of coordination through the main line. Her paper analyzed where solidarity was to be found and where interests diverged. Once they attained the position of margraves, their political alliances crisscrossed Europe.

Uwe Israel's paper, "German-Italian Families in Venice at the End of the Middle Ages," dealt with a massive migration of Germans to Italy. He looked at ways in which the Germans became acculturated and developed alliances through marriage and professions. Especially in the first generation, the German migrants kept lively contacts with their places of origins. Especially interesting were the printers, with something on the order of 150 workshops. Interesting also was the Sicilian immigrant group that found ready contacts with the Germans. Israel analyzed marriages and godparentage, as well as the development of networks based on friendship. Migrants themselves constantly played a role in attracting new migrants and in providing links along which migration took place. By drawing on sources relating to social history, such as baptismal registers, tax declarations, and wills, different types of German-Italian immigrant families can be distinguished in late medieval Venice.

Simon Teuscher's paper, "Medieval Nobility in Transregional Perspective," examined "people in between." He argued that the current understanding of patrician families as sedentary and strongly attached to cities needs to be modified: Rootedness also needed mobility. In fact, when one examines genealogies and goes beyond the straight line of succession to the major estate, one finds a great deal of mobility. Each child in a family had a legitimate claim to the family property, but the bulk of assets could not be divided. Sending young men away prevented conflict, but the practice also made for diversification. The migrant sons could run branches of the family business, serve at princely courts, and act as conduits for information. Families that developed a culture of migration were successful over many generations in establishing strategic patterns of diversification.

Michaela Hohkamp's paper, "Kinship Dynamics among Ruling Families at the Dawn of the Modern Era," developed the theme of "Haus-

denken" among royal families. She argued that state institutions should not be given precedence over the political and social functions of kinship. She analyzed the rise of primogeniture in the German dynasties and examined the roles of women as essential to maintaining political networks among different families. She especially emphasized the role of aunts in the development of multi-relational kinship networks. A key thing was the central role of women for kin. She traced shifts over the early modern period in the kinds of female kin that played central roles: the aunt, the *Schwesterfrau*, the sister-in-law.

Ruxhsana Qamber's paper, "Family Matters: Post-1492 Transatlantic Muslim Migrants," looked at patterns of Morisco networks between Spain and Mexico. She examined two family narratives that can be found in Inquisition records. Women of the families were placed as servants in well-to-do households and played a central role in developing and maintaining networks. Marriages themselves often mixed Christian and Morisco spouses with rather syncretic religious practices. Not just people circulated between Mexico and Spain: Documents did as well. Testimony given in Mexico might have important implications for family members living in Spain. Families developed strategies to protect each other in a transnational political/communication system with transnational families.

Francesca Trivellato's paper, "Diaspora, Marriage, and Dowry: Trans-regional Sephardic Families and Business Organization in the Mediterranean (Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)," offered a strong call for a comparative look at the family. Her point was that, although many studies point to the importance of kinship in trading diasporas, they seldom are specific enough to catch the particular ecologies of particular situations. The reference to kinship is too vague. What is needed is a comparative perspective that looks at "internal articulation" and marriage practices. Each of the early modern trading groups (and modern ones) utilized kinship in different ways and had different norms. Marriage could be used to integrate groups into a local or regional society: They could call upon or exclude women, or they could integrate people across quite extended space. Trivellato's case in point was the Sephardic community in Livorno, where particular families created close kin relations with families in Venice, the Ottoman Empire, and European ports. Marriage was the instrument for creating networks and for building capital. Here the instrument of choice was strict endogamy, with parallel cousin marriage and uncle/niece marriages, a strategy used by the Rothschilds in the nineteenth century. The important point was that such marriages were used to "pursue, create, and expand opportunities." It is often said that endogamous marriages are a strategy for keeping property

within the family, but clearly the endogamous practices in nineteenth-century Europe have to be understood in the context of grasping new opportunities. In her context, marriage alliances went together with permanent business partnerships and were part of a system of raising capital and associating partners. This created a close and interconnected community, with a contractual open-endedness that was a flexible strategic tool in long-distance trade. Trivellato also pointed to a peculiarity in the dowry/dower system that protected significant amounts of wealth for women. Her work suggests a close look at women—something that is not often done in diasporic studies. She pointed out that the material interests of these Jewish women were subordinated to the “larger patriarchal and patrimonial logic” of the extended families.

Jonathan Spangler’s paper, “Multi-National Aristocratic Kinship Networks on the Borderlands of France and the Empire from 1500–1815,” presented a series of sovereign princely families from small territories, who provided high court figures, generals and field marshals, governors and prime ministers, and diplomats for France, Spain, Savoy, Sweden, and the Empire. The key point was that siblings could be in the service of rival dynasties, and the same person could move from French to Imperial service (even to Ottoman service). These were families of very high status, whose loyalties were first to their own families, which, although rooted in some small principality or principalities, were crucial for the information networks and courtly personnel that made Europe work as a system. The strategy of the families was to place individuals in service to different states/dynasties and often to maintain branches devoted to different confessions. A family could lose in one area and gain in another. The key thing to note is that they were pan-European, and Spangler went so far as to say that in the early modern period they replaced the medieval church in this function. In his paper, he stressed the importance of the patronage networks that these families themselves built up, which could be a major resource in itself. Kings coveted the loyalty of this or that family precisely because they could integrate recently conquered territories with their patronage networks.

Gisela Mettele’s paper, “The Moravians as an International Fellowship of Brothers and Sisters,” examined an international group that “chose” kinship. She was interested in the imaginary order of belonging to a family and the development of networks of mutual aid and solidarity. She examined the circulation of information about family events from many different places around the globe, and with that, the development of a collective memory. The Moravians observed common rituals, family remembrance days, and funerals, sending details back and forth from Eastern Europe to North America. Information was communicated down

the generations as well. Finally, she looked at circles of marriage that connected different places.

Christopher Johnson's paper, "Into the World: Breton Bourgeois Families Make their Way in the Nation, 1750–1890," brought the idea of "transregional" families to bear on the issues of "transnationalism." He examined the functions of kinship in developing the networks under consideration. It is important to understand the material interests that mediated family connections: business, urban cultural practices, and intellectual circles. Key to the development of familial networks at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the practice of cousin marriage. Marriage could disperse people across the nation.

Christine Philliou's paper, "Phanariot Family Networks before the Greek Revolution of 1821 and their Post-Revolutionary Reconfiguration," dealt with Greek elite families based in Istanbul, called Phanariots. They originated in merchant and money-lending occupations and ended up taking part in a wide range of services for the Ottoman state. Some of the issues Philliou addressed are the nature and structure of the family networks before the Greek Revolution of 1821 and the reconfiguration of the networks under the pressure of the novel nation-state. Before the revolution, these families might best be described as trans-imperial, for they worked relations between the Ottomans, Austria, and Russia. By education and linguistic ability, they made themselves indispensable to the functioning of the Ottoman Empire, as interpreters, diplomats, tax-farmers, provincial administrators, and such. But they were also part of a much larger group of scribes, secretaries, physicians, and servants. By the eighteenth century, these families had developed large networks that spanned Anatolia, the Black Sea, and the Balkans. Sparked by the Greek revolt, the government in Istanbul prompted and carried out a series of massacres, breaking up the coherence of the old Phanariot elites. When it was all over, the Ottomans replaced the old elites with new families, the point being that whole families were appointed. Once again, the family could be organized around an office, which as in Europe was considered as a property, thus giving coherence and continuity to a family and serving as the basis for alliances and patronage. Philliou described the pre-1821 situation as a series of "overlapping networks." After 1821, many of the older families reconfigured themselves: Philliou spoke of diversification. Apparently, some parts of a kin network joined the national project, while other members ended up in states either close to or far from Greece, as what one can now call "transnational families."

David Warren Sabean's paper, "Nineteenth-Century German Families in Transnational Perspective," concentrated on the development of the idea of lineage, with an example taken from the Siemens family.

During the nineteenth century, property-holding families of all stations and classes developed systems of marriage that linked the same families across generations. There were many forms of systematic and unsystematic repeated exchanges, and when one delves into the biographies of particular families, in many cases, particular marriages may seem arbitrary. Certainly there were no rules that created the expectation or the necessity of marrying kin. Exactly how the new forms developed or why people sought out members from within their kin groups for spouses is open to considerable investigation, but the phenomenon can be observed in many corners of Europe throughout the long nineteenth century. An older understanding of repeated marriages ascribed it to localism or provincialism, with the proverbial inbred village as the symptom of a pathological obsession with property, immobility, or fear of change. Other examples of inbred ethnic or religious groups or ruling houses often stirred the imaginations of political pundits, social commentators, or biologists. But we are now able to see that from the middle of the eighteenth century until the aftermath of World War I, a familial dynamic developed that sets this period off from the periods both before and after. Some observers have organized the analysis of the forms that characterize the long nineteenth century around the figure of "cousin" marriage. Certainly cousins as central for the pool of marriageable suitors emerged in all classes during this period, but the phenomenon of marital reciprocity goes well beyond the specific marriage between the children or grandchildren of siblings. What characterizes all of the kinds of marriages is a search for people from the same milieu, similar class background, and for familiarity. With this consideration in mind, it is possible to broaden the perspective on reciprocity and to think of the marriage strategies of the period as oriented toward developing broad, extensive, and well-integrated groups of kin, linked together through horizontally constructed networks. Until now, most studies of kinship have been carried out in local, regional, or national frameworks. But many of the same considerations from more restricted studies might fruitfully be examined by looking at the social dynamics of those families that spread themselves across different nations. This paper explored various kinds of familial reciprocities among German families that dispersed themselves across different nations or that allied themselves with families in different cultures and regions.

Mary Chamberlain's Paper, "The Culture of Caribbean Migration to Britain in the 1950s," dealt with the culture of migration, with migrants who have been on the move for several generations and who conceive of their families as distributed across national boundaries through narratives of continuous movement. The family itself, while represented

through genealogies and descent lines, lacks clear boundaries and is both extensive and inclusive. A good deal of work goes into learning about far-flung cousins and long-deceased ancestors. The migratory culture is centered on celebrating the family, understood as a complicated network of kinship, for which one ought to display loyalty and obligation. Despite the overarching understanding of migration as not disruptive or disorderly but simply interwoven into the warp of collective memory, there are still different ways that men and women represent their lives on the move. Migration does seem to have been more disruptive for women: Chamberlain describes their stories as containing a "searing experience." Men are more apt to see their lives as ones of adventure. Memories are organized more around people than place, although in another place Chamberlain emphasizes the Caribbean (Barbados) as "home," an emotional touchstone, the place to which people wish to or actually return.

Vivian Berghahn's paper, "German Business Elites in New York: Corporate Governance, Capitalist Ideology, and Cultural Belonging," took off from the proliferation of large-scale multinational corporations within the global economy. From geographical relocations to satellite offices and international mergers, firms constantly shift and renegotiate their organizational strategies and practices, and must coordinate their ambitions across a spectrum of business professionals. As a result of these shifts, an elite at the management level from a wide range of cultural and social backgrounds comes together, either under the same parent multinational corporation or as part of cooperative business organizations. Questions of governance arise as to how these culturally diverse professionals interact, not only within the global corporate structure but also in the localities in which they find themselves. How are the cultural beliefs and family values of these transnational elites transforming or transformed by their interactions, both within the firm and by means of the experiences of relocation that they and their families confront? Can we identify how these forces impact upon and shape the business systems in which these professionals operate and the markets that support them? In the realm of the global economy, what influences do these cultural and historical differences have, not only on their personal coping mechanisms, but also on the management practices and business strategies of these multinational corporations?

Jose Moya's paper, "Spanish and Italian Worker Migration to Latin America," began with a historical analysis of human migration and argued that the phenomenon of transnational families has existed for at most five centuries. His point was to set off various forms of migration and various patterns of early modern "transnational" families against nineteenth-century patterns. He examined the unprecedented forms of

migration that characterized the past two centuries. He then looked at patterns of family structure in rural and urban Italy for clues to the kinds of migration patterns found in Latin America. Here he was interested in implicit codes, naturalized habits and expectations, and manners: in short, the kinds of cultural capital that families developed that shaped the forms of migration across the Atlantic.

Dorothee Wierling's paper, "Transnational Familial Links Between Hamburg Coffee Merchants and Latin American Producers in the Twentieth Century," looked at small producers, agents, brokers, importers, roasters, and retailers, concentrating on those at the center of international trade. She examined patterns of male succession in coffee firms and patterns of circulation of relatives. Looking at the experience of particular individuals in detail, she showed how travel linked together German families dispersed across coffee-growing countries. Linkages between Hamburg and coffee-producing countries had to be based on intimate knowledge of individuals and on trust. She also looked at patterns of marriage exchange. Especially interesting are the linkages between coffee and banking. She stressed the "national inside the international families." She also argued that kinship had to be understood as only one institution among many for building trust and reliability. Finally, for the twentieth century, rupture is at the center of international family histories.

Stéphanie Latte Abdallah's paper, "Familial Networks in Palestinian Refugee Camps," dealt with families that are part of a forced migration, Palestinians living in refugee camps in Jordan. One of the chief issues in the analysis of families is to pay attention to the different points of view, interests, and knowledge of different family members. There is no reason to treat the family as totally coordinated and integrated. Similarly, paying close attention to issues of gender allows for a much richer understanding of the way families adapt to new conditions. Women frequently create networks among themselves, establish contacts through neighborhoods, local markets, and kin, and build networks of communication (visiting, correspondence, and now, telephone and email). In some situations, they are the ones who most easily adapt to new conditions, while in others, they may be unable to find their way in new situations of strange customs, languages, and institutions. In the Palestinian context, Latte Abdalla pointed to the traditional role that women play in keeping the family together. Apparently, they are also the gate keepers who are responsible for maintaining the hierarchical edifice of (elite) family networks. In the Palestinian case, in the Jordanian camps, women also are objects invested with fundamental values that give coherence to national ideology. Issues of honor, dress codes, and morality are the media for buttressing the specificity of Palestinian national identity. At the heart of

Latte Abdalla's analysis lies a political movement of opposition organized by women—sometimes radical women—to challenge some of the foundational connections between nation and “traditional” understandings of women's honor. This is a direct challenge to certain forms of patriarchy, and calls into question the entire edifice of protection and subordination. Her paper stressed that the family not only can be a uniting element, but also an institution that generates diverging strategies—here male and female ones.

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