



Binding an Breaking—Creating Communities of Friendship and Patronage. Freiburg im Breisgau: PhD Research Group (Graduiertenkolleg 1288) „Friends, Patrons, Clients“, 04.10.2012-06.10.2012.

Reviewed by Fiona Pfeiffer

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (December, 2012)

Binding an Breaking - Creating Communities of Friendship and Patronage

Between October 4 and October 6, the PhD research group “Friends, Patrons, Clients” (DFG-Graduiertenkolleg 1288 “Freunde, Gönner, Getreue”) of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg held its second international conference. Historians, philosophers and anthropologists gathered to discuss “Binding and Breaking: Creating Communities of Friendship and Patronage”.

After a welcome address by Dietmar Neutatz, the new president of the hosting research group, KATHRIN SHARAF and SABRINA FEICKERT (Freiburg) introduced the dynamics of communities. Seen as “no man is an island”, friendship is an important topic that has been broached increasingly by the social sciences in recent years. According to Georg Simmel, unifying factors are the basis of communities, a communal identity has to subsequently be negotiated by interacting individuals. The rest of the conference was organized around four elements closely associated with friendships and communities: loyalty, trust, conflict and emotions.

In his inaugural talk, KLAUS VAN EICKELS (Bremen) related the perception of physical intimacy between men from medieval society onwards, based on historical anecdotes and artistic representations. Distancing himself from the assumption that medieval society was homophobic, van Eickels pointed out emotional gestures that were not only common for noblemen of the times but important for social cohesion. With romantic love emerging as new “model of reality” in the early 20th century, the dichotomy of homo- and heterosexuality, spreading gradually through the western world, undermined the re-

spectability of male bonding.

In the ensuing discussion the issue of defining friendship was evoked and a solution subsequently offered by KENNETH LOISELLE (San Antonio), who sought to incorporate historico-linguistic sensitivity of emic and analytical clarity of etic approaches in his keynote speech. Loiselles gave an insight into the ethics of loyalty in Early Modern Europe, emphasizing the impact of loyalty on everyday life. Whereas practicalities were a valued but secondary aspect of friendships, in formally confirmed social communities such as the freemasons, instrumentality played a much more prominent role. Loiselles also explained how the modality of private friendship changed over history with the exclusion of friendship from the public realm in the 19th century and the recent reevaluation of personal ties in the globalized world. His proposed approach of determining the type of relationship – hierarchic, friendship or enmity – before analysing the language in use was questioned during discussion.

As all speakers of the panel on loyalty, SHUO WANG (Freiburg/Breisgau) introduced a very specific historical context, talking about the complex concepts of loyalty that reigned in 19th century China. In her case study on the Chinese merchant Howqua she illustrated how demands of both conscientious loyalty to the country and personal loyalty to the emperor remained empty ideals. Following the saying “The sky is high, the emperor is far away”, Howqua’s loyalty towards his local governor was more immediate. Blinded by obligations of personal loyalty, Howqua missed the chance to save China’s reputation in the Napier affair in 1834 in order to find a

favourable solution for his governor.

LYNETTE MITCHELL (Exeter) explored the issue of faithlessness (*apistia*) and how it was avenged in the Greek polis – a social world in which both friends and enemies had clear responsibilities of reciprocity. Accordingly, the question of what might happen when friends were to become enemies was a recurring topic in Greek tragedies. Rituals such as oaths were to provide protection and ensure faithfulness and were often hereditary, requiring renewal by every generation. Gods played a crucial role both as witnesses to oaths and in the form of Erinyes, deities with the specific purpose of pursuing those who broke their oaths. In contrast to 19th century China, in the Greek world, where obligations to friends (*filoi*) could conflict with responsibilities towards the city, the latter had priority over the former.

The second panel on trust was introduced by keynote speaker ADAM SELIGMAN (Boston), who drew attention to contemporary issues. His talk was centred on the analytical aspect of ambiguity. Seligman named language as the most fundamental human way of dealing with abstraction, that is through notation. Paradoxically, despite the constant creation of new categories in a quest for clarification, abstraction and ambiguity keep increasing. Seligman positioned today's nation-state in a realm where peace is the highest value of trust and justice the highest value of confidence. However, in a society where trust is based on sameness, difference causes problems and the borders of sameness need to be constantly surveyed.

Going back to the early 19th century, ANDREAS BÖSCHE (Freiburg/Breisgau) talked about metropolitan Stratimirović as an example of the vigour of trust. Using a definition closely related to that advocated by Seligman ("confidence is about our assumed knowledge of what will be"), Bösche showed how based on religious denomination, Stratimirović had the trust of Vienna's orthodox community and was thus able to represent his congregation on a secular level. Both confession and language were crucial factors in creating trust, and constitute the chore of Bösche's analysis of the metropolitan's correspondence. This approach newly evoked questions about the significance of linguistic expressions that previously surfaced in reaction to Loisel's paper.

Providing a clear regional emphasis, TILL FÖRSTER (Basel) looked at the importance of personal relationships in Northern Côte d'Ivoire. In a society where civil war has destroyed the old systems of trust, new networks are emerging. Personal trust has taken the place of social

evaluation - or in the words of Seligman, moral credit is given - in the search of finding solutions to an economically precarious situation.

ANN-CATHRIN HARDERS (Bielefeld) provided a counterpart to van Eickels focus on male friendships, presenting the role of women in Roman society as integral to political networks. In an environment where the household (*domus*) was the basis of politics (*respublica*), the trust men had in their female family members made them crucial factors in political communication, regulating access to their men and securing their interests. Contributing to an ongoing discussion rooted in contemporary sociological issues, Harders pointed out that the Roman world did not distinguish between „confidence“ and „trust“ – and anchored „trust reliance“ (*fiducia*) in Roman jurisdiction.

The third panel of the conference centered around the topic of „conflicts“. Keynote speaker was historian HILLAY ZMORA (Beer Scheba) who started by discussing „Conflict in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe“. In his controversial talk - inspired by neo-Darwinian thought – he explained how medieval feuds were acted out in the public as means to further the participants' reputation. Feuding was said to have thus been a way of proving one's ability to cooperate and be reliable through conflict. Discussion included the controversy between biological determinism and the humanities as well as the evolution of the distinction between public and private through history.

In the following talk INGO ROHRER (Freiburg/Breisgau) spoke about friendship and conflict within the globalised punk- and hardcore-scene of Buenos Aires from an anthropological perspective. Main topics of his PhD research included cohesion, conflict, disappointment and breakup. Rohrer identified three main types of friendship within the *barrio*, the local scene and the global scene which he analysed employing Victor Turner's concept of experienced, normative, ideological and imagined *communitas*.

Going back to antiquity, philosopher ALBERT JOOSSE (Freiburg/Breisgau) investigated Stoic views on conflict. Community must be in concord, or else it wouldn't be a community – while concord is being defined as the „understanding of common good“. Accordingly, since enmity was seen as dissent and conflict as a result of ignorance, the perfect human being was to be perfectly knowledgeable. From this perspective, those who lack knowledge cannot be in concord and thus must be in conflict.

Focusing on contemporary Italy and turning to yet another discipline, GIULIO MARINI (Rome) spoke about anti-mafia policies from a sociological perspective. It became clear that the Mafia can only function in a setting of *omertá* and indifference in which a large part of society accepts the threat of violence and exchanges freedom for temporary advantages. As long as there are no anti-mafia laws, conflict would itself not be present in a manifest way and remain invisible. Anti-mafia policies can thus be seen as a kind of public intervention.

In the last panel on „emotions“, papers again involved a range of different disciplines, times and cultures. HANS BERNHARD SCHMID (Vienna) gave the keynote presentation on „Community, Emotion, and the Sense of Justice“. After an introduction on rational, motivational and practical roles of emotions and a discussion on the influence of individualism, he analyzed the case of Homer’s Achilles in a vivid manner. He stressed that Achilles’ experience of injustice leads to a lost sense of justice. Achilles’ emotions range from wrath to grudge, grief, rage and finally pity and recovery, ending with a restoration of his lost sense of justice and thus with his being able to be part of a community again. According to Schmid, a „sense of justice“ is a condition of both empathy and sympathy. In the ensuing discussion Schmid stated that similarity certainly facilitates empathy, but empathy is about feeling the other’s feelings as the other person, making otherness part of the very concept of empathy.

SABRINA FEICKERT (Freiburg/Breisgau) discussed legitimation strategies and collective emotions evoking feelings of identification in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Employing Durkheim’s concept of collective effervescence, she explored how the ruler created a common denominator through introducing public rituals and including references to Egyptian cosmology.

Returning to philosophy, MARKO BOSNIĆ (Freiburg/Breisgau) presented a paper on the German-language concept of „*Taktgefühl*“, which describes both rhythm and tact/tactfulness. Touch and tangency are also central to this concept, involving a double perception of touching and being touched, feeling the body and comprehension of feeling the body, self and other, recognising the other in communication – which in turn creates community.

In the last paper, WIBKE BACKHAUS (Freiburg/Breisgau) investigated how two female mountaineers from the 1930ies solved the issue of affiliation, while focusing on the self-representation of the actors

themselves. Affective dimensions of comradeship, have been increasingly monopolised by the political right. The very few women who became mountaineers or participated in alpine expeditions had to negotiate their roles between that of the „mother“ and „comrade“ and faced issues of (de-)sexualisation and antisemitism.

The outgoing spokesperson of the research group responsible for the conference, RONALD ASCH (Freiburg/Breisgau), aptly summarised the conference, leading to a concluding discussion. One of the main topics that were picked up was the role of language, and how a vocabulary that developed for one community can be transferred to another. Also, some of the recurring terms and concepts of the conference such as „reciprocity“, „justice“, „ritual“ and the role of conflict in communities were brought up again, as well as the constant question of how to study discourses on friendship versus practices of friendship.

The conference brought together a variety of disciplines and dealt with a wide range of cultures and times, all related through the topic of friendship. The diverse backgrounds of the participants made it possible to discover new aspects of friendship and the study of friendship, but also to discern similarities and parallels between seemingly distinct research issues.

Conference Overview:

Dietmar Neutatz (University of Freiburg), Spokesperson PhD Research Group „Friends, Patrons, Followers“: Welcome Address

Kathrin Sharaf / Sabrina Feickert (University of Freiburg): Introduction to Topic

Keynote

Klaus Van Eickels (University of Bremen): Operating on the Borders of the Illicit? Homosocial Bonding and Physical Intimacy between Men from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century

Panel I: Loyalty

Keynote

Kenneth Loiselle (Trinity University San Antonio): Friendship and Loyalty in Early Modern Europe

Shuo Wang: The Napier Affair in 1834 – A Chinese Merchant as the Middleman in the Early Sino-Western Confrontation

Lynette Mitchell (University of Exeter): Apistia: Faithlessness and the Greek Polis

*Panel II: Trust**Keynote*

Adam B. Seligman (Boston University): The Challenge of Ambiguity: Confidence, Trust and Shared Experience

Andreas Bösche (University of Freiburg): Imperiale Integrationsfigur oder Wahrer orthodoxer Rechte? Relationen und Handlungsfelder des Metropoliten Stefan von Stratimirović zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts

Till Förster (University of Basel): Agency and Trust – The Transformation of Personal Relations during Civil War

Ann-cathrin Harders (University of Bielefeld): Mother knows best – Zur Rolle römischer Aristokratinnen in sozialen Nahbeziehungen

*Panel III: Conflicts**Keynote*

Hillay Zmora (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): Conflict in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Psychological, Social and Political Aspects

Ingo Rohrer (University of Freiburg): Zusammenhalt

und Auflösung – zu Freundschaft in der globalisierten Punk- und Hardcore-Szene von Buenos Aires

Albert Joosse (University of Freiburg): Stoics on Conflict

Giulio Marini (Rome): The Amoral Familism and the Limits of the Current Anti-Mafia Policies

*Panel IV: Emotions**Keynote*

Hans Bernhard Schmid (University of Vienna): Community, Emotion, and the Sense of Justice. The Case of Achilles

Sabrina Feickert (University of Freiburg): Emotionality and Community in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt

Marko Bosnić (University of Freiburg): Produktion und Seduktion

Wibke Backhaus (University of Freiburg): Widersprüchliche Zugehörigkeiten: Bergkameradinnen der frühen 1930er Jahre

Ronald G. Asch (University of Freiburg): Summary

Concluding Discussion

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

Citation: Fiona Pfeiffer. Review of , *Binding an Breaking — Creating Communities of Friendship and Patronage*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. December, 2012.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=37775>

Copyright © 2012 by H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved. This work may be copied and redistributed for non-commercial, educational purposes, if permission is granted by the author and usage right holders. For permission please contact H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU.