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Frühe Neuzeit – Frühe Moderne ?

Forschungen zur Vielschichtigkeit von Übergangsprozessen

Herausgegeben von

Rudolf Vierhaus und Mitarbeitern
des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte

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Social Background to Vetterleswirtschaft: Kinship in Neckarhausen

by

David Warren Sabean

In 1817 Friedrich List was sent to Heilbronn by the Württemberg king to question those who had decided to leave the country for the New World. They gave many reasons and reflected in detail on the conditions which had made life impossible for them in particular villages across the realm. High taxes were high on the list of grievances, of course, but there was a host of other complaints. Politically a central issue was faction – their term, *parteiisch* – but they described the situation in peculiar terms. They referred to networks of *family* faction, nepotism, and coordinate groups of *cousins* (*Vetterle*). Jacob Hampp from Egolsheim said: "Der Schultheiß und Bürgermeister halten zusammen, denn sie sind Vetter und die andern Magistrats-Personen halten auch mit, weil sie zusammen verwandt sind."[1] Johann Jacob Strähle from Egolsheim also made the same point: "Der Magistrat ist eine Familie ... bei Strassen- und anderen Akkorden ist ... den Bürgern das Brod vor dem Munde weg."[2] And in a similar vein, Sebastian Baumgart and others from Dahnenfeld: "... die Beamte zusammen verwandt, und nur Eine Kette sind."[3]

There are several connections which the witnesses made, and one should pay close attention to how they actually put the issues. Besides taxes and inflation, other matters such as tithe corruption, bullying, packing seats on the village magistrates, controlling credit, self-serving cooperation with

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[1] Aufbruch nach Amerika. Friedrich List und die Auswanderung aus Baden und Württemberg 1816/17. Dokumentation einer sozialer Bewegung. Ed. Günter Moltmann. Tübingen 1979 p. 131.

[2] Ibid., p. 132.

[3] Ibid., p. 166. Also Christian Schwarz from Sülzbach: "... mein OrtsVorsteher selbst hat mir den Vorschlag gemacht, nach Amerika zu ziehen, weil sein eigener Tochtermann Güter neben mir liegen hat," p. 158. Also two Bürger from Wilsbach warned about influence and collusion: "... wenn ein Commissarius komme, demselben noch aufzugeben wäre, daß er nicht im Wirtshaus logiren dörfe, weil die Wirthe Magistratspersonen und Schwager zu dem Burgermeister seyen.", p. 165.

higher authorities, irregularities in financial operations, and unfair allocation of taxes were all coupled with coordination of political practice through kinship.[4] It is crucial to find in List's report that the villagers' own viewpoint was translated from kinship to class. List referred to factionalism, to a struggle between rich and poor, but completely supressed any mention of political or social formations driven by kinship considerations. I want to suggest that he was typical for emerging social science which was in the process of developing class as the key analytical concept for representing advanced societies. Kinship became something archaic, a principle ordered in terms of historical progress, a social formation fitting an earlier stage of development.

In Württemberg around 1800, people used the term "Vetterleswirtschaft" to represent the political situation in the villages and towns which made up the duchy, soon-to-become-kingdom, of Württemberg. Carola Lipp has gathered together scattered references to show us at once how central the term was at the time and to suggest that we need to take such forms of representation more seriously.[5] If kinship was an ordering principle, how do we analyse it? What is the relationship of kinship to class formation, and which one of them is prior to the other – not in time but structurally. And furthermore, if kinship was an ordering principle, does it have a history?

The references in the testimonies taken by List were explicitly to *cousins.* And, of course, the term "Vetterleswirtschaft" refers to people who are related to each other by blood. It may have a general reference to "relatives" or consanguineal or even affinal relations, but its specific reference to "cousins" may well not be irrelevant to an analysis of what the term means. "Nepotism", literally connoting favor to nephews, may well have referred to a patronage system favoring all kinds of relatives but its structural principle was built on uncle/nephew ties stemming from the inability of celibate churchmen to pass on office and perquisites to their direct heirs.[6] By contrast, Vetterleswirtschaft points to coordination by men on the same

[4] Ibid., pp. 130–66.

[5] See the comments of CAROLA LIPP in: F.A. KÖHLER, NEHREN, Eine Dorfchronik der Spätaufklärung. Ed. C. LIPP, W. KASCHUBA, and E. FRAHM (Untersuchungen des Ludwig-Uhland-Instituts der Universität Tübingen 52). Tübingen 1981. pp. 164–6.

[6] There is also an argument about the peculiar relation of the mother's brother and sister's son in Western feudal society. See G. DUBY, In Northwestern France: the "Youth" in Twelfth Century Aristocratic Society, in: Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe. Ed. F. L. CHEYETTE. New York 1968 pp. 198–209. See also C. H. BELL, The Sister's Son in the Medieval German Epic. A Study in the Survival of Matriliny (University of California Publications in Modern Philology 10). Berkeley 1920 pp. 67–182.

generational plane. Cousins, of course are positioned vis-à-vis each other according to the marriage alliances struck by their parents. Therefore any analysis of cousin networks must develop an understanding of the principles of marriage alliance.

Lévi-Strauss offers a useful set of questions based on the notion that marriage involves a principle of exchange.[7] We do not have to follow his assumption about women being the counters in the system nor do we have to assume that the relevant players in the game are men. Quite clearly both men and women are exchanged in a marriage alliance, and as Bourdieu has shown, despite the acknowledged rules or public ideology, women may in fact be the ones to control the marriage market.[8] Most analyses of marriage alliance confine consideration to marriage rules and policy. But marriage is only one part of a more complex system of exchange. We might say that a particular marriage opens up a path, or establishes a bridge, or makes a breach in a wall – adapting some such metaphor to suggest that marriage is a crucial structural element for establishing the lines along which further communication can flow. But we must remember that a particular marriage might arise from an alliance already established by other means. And on the other hand that a path between two groups might remain unused. In other words, an exchange system implies more than self-interest and tactical manoeuvre. It also implies long-term debt and obligation and strategical considerations. Kinship is often seen as a principle of solidarity, but any network is constructed by inclusion and exclusion, limited resources, claims, and counterclaims, memories, injuries, and revised intentions.

The historian's materials make it difficult to be systematic about kinship alliance. There is a kind of ad hoc aspect to what we find. In a particular instance in a particular biography, someone acts in such a way that the principle of action appears to be family solidarity. Other examples suggest other principles at action such as neighborhood, class, or self-interest. For European history, kinship has seldom been warranted a very clear definition, and there is little or no basis for doing comparative kinship studies. The story used to be put in before and after terms: *before* – industrialization, urbanization, modernization, capitalism–most people lived their lives inside a web of kinship, characterized by solidarity and community. And yet kinship itself was never investigated and remained tied to amorphous terms like "network" or "web" or "connection." Most research was centered on groups: corporations, guilds, Stände, and ultimately classes. But there is more to the problem than just research strategy, the exploitation of

[7] C. LÉVI-STRAUSS, The Elementary Structures of Kinship. Boston ²1969 pp. 29–68.

[8] P. BOURDIEU, Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge 1977 pp. 30–71.

difficult historical materials, or assumptions about coordinate interests. Both historicism and sociology (and hence that branch of social history closely tied to sociology) assume the individual as the starting point and look for coordinate interests in formal and informal *groups* of otherwise isolated individuals, in *shared* opinions and values, and in conscious and unconscious *collective* motivations.[9] These are the generalizing sciences, for which the actors in history are specific individuals or specified coordinate groups with the same values, interests, or goals – in short, classes. By contrast, anthropology, critical theory, and those forms of history closely allied with them (*Alltagsgeschichte*, cultural history, and certain varieties of social history) make relationships the starting point of their work. For them the individual is fashioned reciprocally and is the *outcome* of historical processes not their starting point.[10] These are the comparative sciences in contrast to the generalizing ones, which distinguish singularity from individualism, and which lay greater stress on heuristic practice than on theoretical display.

Kinship does not lead us to the formal analysis of groups but to the study of such things as strategies and exchanges. It is not a thing or a single principle but a relational concept – one that used to be part and parcel of social anthropology. In the history of Neckarhausen, we find that the narrative which many generations of modernization theorists have taught us to expect was reversed – as mobility developed, as population increased, as capital penetrated agricultural production, as agriculture was intensified, as a land market became important and as land holding fractionalized, as commodity production increased, as social strata became more pronounced, as feudal and familial encumbrances on property were abolished, as labor became a commodity (wages), Neckarhausen became a "kinship hot" society. Close kin developed a flexible set of exchanges, passing marriage partners, godparents, guardians, political favors, work contacts, and financial guarantees back and forth. The old notion that "traditional" rural society was characterized by an age-old web of kinship and that urbanization and geographical mobility reoriented people away from ascriptive relationships to ones of mutual advantage is increasingly unhelpful. The contrast between kinship and contract was developed by observers precisely at a time when rural kinship was being reordered toward a complex, flexible – modern – system of alliance. We have outlined here large issues of social

[9] On this point, see E. Leach, Social Anthropology. New York 1982; L. Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and Its Implications. Chicago 1970; Norbert Elias, Court Society. New York 1983.

[10] See the argument, for example, in Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley 1984.

formation, but we need a strategy for handling them precisely in time and space, which brings us to the village study.

In order to explore the issues having to do with kinship in Neckarhausen, we can examine a set of exchange relationships between families: marriage, land sales, ritual kinship (or godparentage), guardianship, and financial and performance guarantees or bonds.[11] I will contrast two cohorts, that of 1700–09 and that of 1820–9, and will show that at the beginning of the eighteenth century there were no systematic alliances between families related to each other consanguineally (by blood) – no links by marriage, by ritual kinship, or through the sale of land – while by contrast, by the early nineteenth century a systematic alliance system was firmly in place. In other words ca. 1700 no one married a cousin, chose one as godparent, or sought one out to buy land from. By 1800, cousins created tight overlapping repeated exchanges with each other which were replicated from generation to generation. This change was accompanied by a radical break in the way couples put together their wealth at marriage. Early in the eighteenth century, husbands and wives brought radically dissimilar *Heiratsgüter* to a marriage, while by the early nineteenth century they were usually very closely matched with each other. Let us explore this phenomenon first.

In the early eighteenth century husbands and wives seldom brought similar amounts of property to a marriage. The lack of equality between spouses contrasts very sharply with the obsessive equality accorded to siblings in the process of inheritance. In Neckarhausen, a typical partible inheritance village, all children inherited the same amount of property and the same kind of things.[12] Daughters received as much land as did sons. As a result of this practice, husbands and wives were not distinguished by the kinds of property they brought to a marriage, and there was no particular word for female dowry (*Mitgift*) – both spouses had a *Zubringen* or *Heiratsgut*. A young couple without a house might live for a period of years in the house of either parent or move to rented quarters somewhere in the village. There was no continuity – as in an Anerbengebiet – of house, Hof, and land in a particular lineage or line, especially not in one defined by patrilineal principles.[13] The inequality of husbands and wives had only to do with the amount of total property – movable and immovable – they contributed to what we might call the marital fund or marital estate.

[11] Part of the argument is adumbrated in D. Sabean, Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870. Cambridge 1990 pp. 371–432. I plan an extended treatment in a book on kinship in Neckarhausen.

[12] Ibid., pp. 247–258.

[13] Ibid., pp. 259–299.

To measure the sexual "balance of trade," I studied 81 marriages contracted between the 1640s and 1750s.[14] To simplify the calculation, I reckoned the percentage the wife contributed to the total household, controlling for change over time, the size of the marital fund, occupation of the husband, residence, relative wealth, and remarriage. Overall in two-thirds of the cases, women contributed either less than a third of the property or more than two-thirds. That is, in the overwhelming majority of instances, they were either much poorer than their husbands or much wealthier. Over the period between 1640 and 1759, there was no essential change in the pattern, and neither occupation nor residence played a role. What did matter was the relative wealth of the couple and whether one of them was widowed or widowered. The richer the couple as a whole, the greater the disparity between the partners, especially if measured in terms of immovable property. The richest 25% of newly married couples brought evenly balanced amounts of land and buildings only 8% of the time (that is, where the wife brought between 33.4 and 66.7% of the value). And remarriage exacerbated the differences. Where both spouses were being married for the first time, neither sex had an advantage. Either partner was as likely to bring the lion's share. Where one of the partners was single and the other was widowed, the remarrying spouse was almost always considerably wealthier than the single one. The difference was that men more frequently remarried than did women and remarriage (or age) almost always involved accumulation. Therefore the wealthiest *neogami* in the village were always widowers, some entering marriage for the third and fourth time, and they usually married women who had little property at all. A typical example is Rudolph Schober, widower, who married in 1732. He brought 1322 fl. to the marriage while his wife brought only 26 fl. There was absolutely no attempt on the part of a wealthy person, male or female, to attract a spouse with a similar amount of property. Indeed, the opposite was the case. The more one had, the greater the disparity with the partner.

There are many issues which follow from the pattern of inequality among spouses — including, of course, that of the balance of power inside the household — but the thing I want to underline is that marriage almost always linked together families of differential wealth. Husbands and wives were the core of an alliance system which did not involve equal exchange and did not allow for particular families to capitalize on what one generation accumulated. A strategy of matching fortune with fortune would have driven

[14] Ibid., pp. 225–238.

a sharp wedge between classes. Rather the opposite happened — lines of different "strata" were constantly interwoven together. Alliances were cast among families of differential fortune. In the wider alliance, wealthier households were able to act as patrons to poorer ones, with the connecting link between them being the core alliance of a particular couple whose fund was composed of disparate amounts of property. Production in the village linked families with plow teams and agricultural gear with other families with available labor and with land which could not be worked without the assistance and cooperation of their wealthier patrons.[15] And the politics of the village centered on patron/client relationships cemented through marriage and, as we shall see, ritual kinship.

By the end of the eighteenth century all this had changed. Husbands and wives came to match their respective portions *much* more exactly.[16] If around 1700 two-thirds of the marriages displayed inequality, 100 years later two-thirds of them were characterized by more or less exact equality; that is, in the overwhelming majority of cases women brought portions equal to between 33 and 67% of the total marital fund. And when we look at those families where the partners were unequal we find that they were still matching fortune closely to fortune. At the top of the wealth scale, one example illustrates the point. The portion of the future Schultheiss Friedrich Krumm was more than two-thirds of the marital estate. But he brought the largest portion of the 100 in the sample. The woman he married brought the fifth largest portion — they were from the same wealthy stratum. At the bottom of the scale a woman inheriting quarter of a house and a garden would contribute the lion's share. Her husband's portion of a few movables and his clothes put him in the same class even if her portion in purely monetary terms outweighed his considerably. The statistical analysis demonstrates that there was no difference in practices according to occupation, wealth, residence, or marital order. The typical pattern from the earlier period of the wealthy widower married to an impoverished widow or destitute single women had disappeared. And the very wealthy were careful to attract partners with suitably large marriage portions.

This pattern demonstrates a very radical break with the past. The loose, open, generalized intravillage connubium had given way to a pattern of class endogamy. In the earlier situation people with wealth avoided each other, but now they sought each other out. Only during this period do we find marital disputes centered on disappointments regarding a spouse's portion. Everything points to a greater differentiation of class in the village

[15] Ibid., pp. 300–316.
[16] Ibid., pp. 238–246.

by the late eighteenth century. In the heat of argument, villagers began to hurl insults at each other about their relative standings in the wealth hierarchy. This discourse of property was supported by a change in the material conditions of alliance.

In the early eighteenth century, husbands and wives came from families which were quite different from each other in demographic make-up, wealth, and political standing. The power situation inside the house was derived from the fact that the spouses were distinctly unequal. Such a family was a connecting point of allied families ordered hierarchically or asymmetrically to each other. Struggles between husbands and wives were often about the terms of alliance. Sometimes the parents or siblings of one of the partners interfered too much in their house. In many instances, their relative power was an issue, and it was very difficult for a husband with a comparatively small portion to fulfill the legal and ideological tasks of administration. This was doubly so for the frequent situation where he was coupled with a widowed, propertied, older wife.

By the late eighteenth century, marital alliances connected people of equal wealth, and the divisions between landed agricultural producers and small artisans were constructed ever more clearly. People with power constructed alliances among themselves. There was greater stress on equal contribution to the household production and more disputes over the dividing lines between gender spheres of authority. Expropriation of labor became an issue in the house, and the small differences between allied families came in for continual comment. The different families were continually weighed and balanced from the moment of a proposed marriage on through its duration. Much of the discourse about social stratification became narrowed to one about family and kinship, this at a time when classes began to break ties of marriage alliance and ritual kinship with each other, and Herrschaft and resistance became more visible.

The shift in the way marriage alliances were formed did not involve just greater integration of the various strata in the village. It was also accompanied by, and I will argue driven by, a greater integration of families. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, people did indeed choose to marry kin, but they never married blood relatives. Statistically about one marriage out of four involved people who were related to each other in some way (figures for 1660–1730), with second marriages clearly more prone to such connections (40% vs. 20%). Almost all of these marriages involved reckoning through affinal links. There were no first or second cousins, no close affines, such as marriage with the deceased wife's sister or even with the brother's wife's sister or sister's husband's sister, and no blood relatives of a deceased spouse. There were, of course, various marriage prohibitions but both first

and second cousins were dispensable (since 1687), so that the avoidance of such marriages was not the result of state or church interdiction. And although the wife's sister was forbidden, there was no prohibition against affines of affines, brother's wife's sister, sister's husband's sister, wife's brother's wife, etc. Clearly alliances struck in one generation were not replicated in the following one, or the next two. Nor were alliances struck in one generation reconstructed at the death of a spouse (no one married a deceased spouse's sister, aunt, or cousin, even where dispensable). Most people avoided kin of all kinds, but some, especially those marrying for a second or third time found a spouse among the affinal kin of a brother- or sister-in-law.

The fact that marriage in that period almost always connected families of differential wealth meant that brothers-in-law were usually connected to each other as patrons and clients. Finding a spouse through a brother-in-law was to find one within his patronage orbit or among one's own clients. A very wealthy widower who married a poor widow was most likely solidifying a clientage network. Part of the social dynamics of the village were determined by asymmetrical ties of different families through marriage. These ties were often solidified as members of a clientage group married among each other, or a powerful, rich, older villager sought out a spouse from his clientage network. But such relationships were not easily reproducible from generation to generation. This marriage system can be labeled exogamous. It coupled partners who were not related to each other by blood and made systematic alliances between families over time impossible. The coupling of unequal partners also continually broke up class solidarity. That did not mean that hierarchy was less important than later or that rule and power were not distributed differentially. It did mean that family obligations made the poor exploitable in specific ways but also forced village politics into a form of clientage. Affinal kin were linked together in short, asymmetrical chains, which for any sibling group criss-crossed, some closing back in on themselves through marriage, some through ritual kinship (as we shall see), and others through clientage as various chains linked the powerless in the village with its power elite.

All this contrasts again very sharply with the period at the beginning of the nineteenth century. By then the village population had more than doubled (340 to 738). While the group of full-time peasant producers remained relatively stable, the class of artisanal producers and farm-laborers grew considerably. Many villagers became involved in wage-dependent labor outside Neckarhausen in skilled and unskilled construction. And the village was well underway to solidifying the new forms of intensified, capitalized agriculture. With the new mobility came also the possibility of marrying

outside the village in a much larger "field." It was easier to avoid relatives and kin in a larger village and a context of mobility, yet by this time a tight endogamous marriage system had been constructed.

For the cohort centered on the 1820s (marriages 1790s–1840s), about one marriage in four involved kin — not much different from the first decade of the eighteenth century. But the percentage would grow so that by the 1860s, 2 in 5 would involve kin (40%). The difference has to do with the nature of kin marriages. At the beginning of the eighteenth century we find short chains of people connected through affinal ties. In the nineteenth century, alliance between blood kin were reproduced each new generation. If we shift our gaze from the strategies of individuals to those of sibling groups, we find that only one family out of ten failed to renegotiate an already established alliance. Already by the 1780s marriage to second cousins was well established in the village. But by the early decades of the nineteenth century, marriages between first cousins were normal. Marriages between second cousins reproduce an alliance struck by grandparents, so that such marriages contracted in the 1780s reached back to exchanges made in the 1740s and earlier. Marriages between first cousins repeat exchanges made in the parents' generation. It appears that the exchanges between allied families were being tightened up around 1800. This phenomenon goes together with exchanges which were repeated on the same generational plane. We frequently find men marrying close relatives, including sisters, of a deceased spouse, and several families arranged more than one marriage between their children.

The reference to cousins marrying each other obscures the nature of alliance somewhat. First of all, the exchange took place within a pattern which emphasized descent traced through men. In other words, the alliances were between "patrilines." Secondly the alliances cannot be thought of in terms of any particular preferred marriage. Rather members of two patrilines frequently made several marriages over a short space of time which called for another spurt of exchanges a generation or two down the line. What looks from the point of view of a single marriage like the reproduction of a tie first made two generations back could in fact be one of several exchanges negotiated between two patrilines in every single generation. The point of such a recurring alliance, however, was not to link *patrilines* together in some peasant reification project. It was rather to strengthen and redouble social ties which would atrophy if not recast. Many marriages, of course, followed quite different strategies, striking out boldly to create new relations, which in turn might die with the particular actors or become the basis for later calculations. This was an open, flexible system in which strategies involve both the reproduction of relationships already constructed

and the construction of new ones. What ought to be clear, however, is that a tight endogamous pattern of alliance is "modern," not archaic, certainly in the sense of being developed during a period of capitalized agriculture and wage-labor. It also was closely tied to the transformation of class relations in the village. As I will argue, consanguineal marriage endogamy was the matrix out of which class endogamy arose. People began to marry cousins before they began to match marriage portions so closely. In any event class *differentiation* went hand in hand with kin *integration*.

In a village swollen in population, undergoing capitalization and intensification of agriculture, where class differentiation was increasing and the pains of harsh economic cycles and subsistence crises were sharply felt, where regional mobility was increasing and the village becoming economically more integrated into wider markets, where property holdings were becoming decimated and subject to rapid turnover, and where pauperization came to characterize many villagers and affect the pattern of social relations, with all this going on villagers consolidated and extended the system of marriage alliances developed in the fourth, fifth, and sixth decades of the eighteenth century. The period of intense political discourse about "Vetterle" was a period of social formation of systematic marriage alliance.

But there are two fundamental institutions for creating long term relationships between people: marriage and godparentage (or what is sometimes called ritual or spiritual kinship). How does godparentage fit into the pattern we have been discussing? For one thing, right through the entire period I have studied from the late sixteenth century to 1870, a set of godparents stood for all the children of a particular marriage, so there was already built into the relationship a specific continuity between two particular "houses" in any one generation. During the early part of the eighteenth century, godparents were chosen from among relatives of a couple about 20% of the time. By the 1820s, this had changed to 87%. Around 1700, godparents were on average 10 years older than the parents, but by the 1820s were exactly the same age. Godparents in the early eighteenth century, then, were almost always older, non-relatives, and they were richer than the parents. They were often chosen from members of the village patriciate — the Schultheiss, Bürgermeister, or members of the Gericht, and even the pastor or schoolmaster. Godparentage appears to fit nicely into the pattern of patronage/clientage which characterized the period. Just as with marriage exchange, ritual kinship linked the wealthy and poor together. Furthermore, it can be shown that the successors of a godparent very frequently stood as godparents for successive generations of a family. This pattern lasted from the end of the Thirty Years War until the 1740s. By the 1820s, the poor did not seek out rich patrons as godparents, nor did members of the

patriciate stand as godparents for anyone except their peers. And the pastor was never called upon for the function.

I have already noted that early in the eighteenth century no more than one in five families called upon relatives as godparents. Even then, those who did completely avoided close relatives and those related by blood — no brothers or sisters, uncles or aunts, mothers or fathers, or first or second cousins. There were also no close affinal relatives — not the sister's husband or brother's wife. Everything points to a strategy of reaching outside the close set of kin to create new lines of attachments. People constructed ritual kin ties with people older, more established, wealthier and more powerful. The village patriciate itself reached outside the village to patrons in the near-by regional capital of Nürtingen. Some ties were developed with distant affines, most likely chosen because of the patron/client implications in the relationship.

By the 1820s not only were parents choosing godparents of their own social standing and age, but they were also choosing mostly kin. Almost 3 out of 10 were the closest relatives — father, mother, brother, sister — , and another 10% were chosen from close in-laws — brother's wife and sister's husband. First cousins now made up a full 25% of godparents and second cousins also played a substantial role. Not just marriage but godparentage as well can be used to build or support systematic connections between families. A policy of marrying cousins turned other cousins (their siblings) into close affines, and the use of close affines as godparents suggests a coordinate function. Since husbands and wives now brought exactly the same amount of property together, and a tighter class endogamy had developed, then brothers-in-law would have had similar class, political, and productive interests. Given the patrilineal structure of marriage alliance, brothers-in-law represented two patrilines. Their coordinate activity created the basis for the alliance of their children (cousins) in the next generation. Ritual kinship and marriage exchange sometimes operated as alternative links in an alliance. In between the exchange of marriage partners separated in time were periods of intense ritual kin activity. In many cases, people first became godparents for each other before marriage alliances were established. And marriage alliances always became reinforced with ritual kinship.

I have been suggesting that although the term "Vetterleswirtschaft" designates a system of coordinate politics based on kinship, it itself points to the underlying structural importance of real cousins. The set of exchanges between people related to each other by blood, however, also meant that affinal relations were fundamental. With every marriage of two cousins, far many more cousins were brought into relation with each other as brothers-

and sisters-in-law. I do not have space to explore other key relationships in this paper in detail. Guardianship (*Pflegschaft*), for example, was a crucial institution involving mutual obligation between families. Whenever one parent died, a guardian from that spouse's side of the family was appointed to administer the property rights of the children. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, guardians were chosen from the circle of the immediate family or in many instances from non-relatives altogether, especially from among the group of village magistrates, emphasizing once again the potentialities of patronage. By the 1820s, significantly, brothers-in-law, uncles, first cousins, and even second cousins were chosen. Thus a surviving spouse was coupled with the deceased spouse's wider set of consanguineal and affinal kin in coordinate activities concerning the children. A similar pattern can be seen with the institution of *Kriegsvogtschaft*. In Württemberg, the property rights of wives were under special protection until the termination of gender tutelage (*Geschlechtsvormundschaft*) in 1828. Whenever a husband transacted any kind of business affecting family property, it had to be done before a court, with a Kriegsvogt assigned to protect the wife's interest. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Kriegsvögte were either brothers or uncles of the wives or members of the village magistrates — once again the closest kin or non-related patrons. By the 1820s, the last decade of the institution, a substantial number of Kriegsvögte were uncles or cousins, seconded by brothers-in-law. Only very occasionally were fathers and brothers utilized for the office. Once again the extension outward from a tight family core to wider affinal and above all consanguineal kin was the pattern. Throughout the history of any particular family, two men met in court to deal with the rights of any woman — her husband and her brother-in-law, uncle, or cousin. Every important exchange — marriage, ritual kinship, guardianship, Kriegsvogtschaft — demonstrates a shift during the eighteenth century from one of patronage and clientage to one where networks of coordinate cousins and brothers-in-law were determinate.

We need now to explore the temporal coordinates of the system and to ask about the reasons for its development.

1) There may well have been issues of production which underlay a closer drawing together of cousins. Arable strips were laid out in the fields with boundaries, boundary dividers, markers, roads and paths to gain access, and specific rights of neighborly trespass. The strip itself was efficiently plowed and cultivated as a unit. But the rules of partible inheritance necessitated dividing up the arable parcels among the heirs. Still, these parcels remained as cultivation units, without internal boundaries and divisional spaces. Ever thinner strips would have been impossible to plow individually, and land taken away for new boundaries would have reduced

the available land for cultivation. The population rise and the rules of partible inheritance whittled away the size of the portion of each parcel which fell to a particular individual. For example, between 1700 and 1740 the size fell by almost 25% and by 1860 was half of what it had been in 1700.[17] By the 1740s adjacent parcels in the same strip were held by uncles and nephews and by cousins. With each generation the genealogical distance increased, although trading and selling frequently reconstituted the strips. But the overall process was to put together brothers-in-law and consanguineal kin in situations where they had to cooperate with each other. It is the cooperation itself which created the bonds and tensions which called upon people to reinforce ties through ritual kinship and marriage. Marrying so as to put specific parcels back together would have been inefficient, since the holdings of one family were scattered all over the arable fields, with very few of those of any two families being contiguous.

There is a second aspect to production which might have led away from a patronage system to an interplay of close relatives. Agriculture at the beginning of the eighteenth century was carried on with the use of horses, and horses were very unevenly distributed in the population. Younger, smaller holders were dependent on older, wealthier ones to plow and harrow their land and to provide carting services. Over the course of the eighteenth century and certainly by 1820, oxen (and cows) were substituted for horses. Far many more people had their own traction or part of the equipment to share with others. At the same time, agricultural equipment was often held by brothers and brothers-in-law by shares — each owning half or a third of all plows, harrows, yokes, and wagons.[18] The same process of generational turnover brought uncles and nephews and cousins together no longer in an asymmetrical relation, some with agricultural equipment and some with none, but as groups who had to cooperate together to put together plough teams and equipment.

2) The land market changed its character between 1700 and 1820 completely.[19] Over the period, encumbrances such as the right of relatives to redeem family land fell away. Most land came to be sold at auction, and few people put any conditions on a sale such as the right to continued use or a share in the proceeds. In other words, all the "feudal" restrictions on free sale disappeared. At the same time the size of the market increased considerably. The total sales of arable plots per decade rose 400%. The number of buyers in a decade went from 41 to 232, more than 5 1/2 times.

[17] Ibid., p. 361.
[18] Ibid., pp. 300–11.
[19] Ibid., pp. 355–70.

And the price per unit of arable land rose four-fold. The market in 1700 was only a supplement to inheritance as a means of distribution of property in the village. It accounted for only about 35% as much property transfer as inheritance. Even then a large proportion (62%) of land sold went to members of the nuclear family (father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister). Collateral blood relatives (cousins, uncles, nephews) accounted for very few sales. Combining inheritance and sales, only about 10% of property transfers went outside the immediate family during the decade. That 10%, however, mostly involved non-kin altogether. In most such cases the two parties had a common godparent, which suggests another piece to the ritual parent/patronage system.

By the 1820s, with a greatly expanded, ever more formal market, one in which forced sales due to foreclosure and bankruptcy continually disrupted family economies, cousins had come to play a central role in the market. The market itself accounted for almost as much transfer of land as inheritance. Still only about a third of the sales went to non-relatives. Cousins accounted now for over 35% of sales to relatives. Altogether, nuclear family members and cousins bought over half of all parcels of land and parts of buildings offered for sale during the decade. And many sales which did not go to relatives by my strict criteria in fact went to third cousins.

What we find is that the market was able to work as a distribution mechanism to integrate a developing set of relations among consanguineal kin. Given the intestate rules, which narrowed claims, as in most European societies, to lineal claimants, inheritance was a poor means for integrating kin in a situation of extreme fragmentation of land and growing stratification. The shift from an inheritance-driven system to one balanced more by looser exchanges of marriage partners and land among allied kin gave a familial function to the market. In the situation of an ever growing market, networks between landholders were necessary to control and channel the access to resources. Land hunger put ever greater pressure on the price and drove up demand. The development of cousin marriages among the land holders coincided closely with the opening up of the market. They developed coordinating linkages among themselves to control the distribution of resources.

3) The timing of the rise of consanguineal alliances tells us a great deal about the reasons for its development.[20] The first families to ally together

[20] A good text for the period when Vetterleswirtschaft was being developed comes from the village of Laichingen, the text provided by HANS MEDICK. From the Ruog-Gerichts-Protokolle, 1734–43. Stadtarchiv Laichingen pp. 129f. (2 Dec. 1738): "[Es] hat dieses Orths die üble Amtmann by herrschaftlichen Geschäften sowohlen als andere Beamten und frembden

and reproduce their alliances through repeated marriages and the extention of ritual kinship were from the patriciate – the magistrate families, whether they were Bauern or artisans. They did so in the 1740s, 50s, and 60s at the same time as the village came to control or administer ever more resources. It was during this period that interlocking families came to control all of the magistrates offices. One major issue was the control of the auction of the tithes, the price for which was set by collusive bidding.[21] During this period clear factions developed and people excluded from the bidding began to complain.[22] But the patriciate in turn utilized their connections with Oberamt officials to silence their opponents. The cutting edge, then, of the new system of coordination of allied blood relatives was

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Leuthen zu keiner Ehre gleichende Gewohnheit, also überhand genommen, daß wann ein oder anderer Burger, der weith oder nahe mit demselben verwandt vor Amt, Gericht, oder sonstiger Verhandlung mit Frembden oder einem Mitburger kommt, ihm einen Vetter heißet, wodurch manchmal geschiehet, daß eines solchen Gegenpart abgeschröckt und den Spruch vor partheyisch hält: diesem aber zu begegnen und abzukommen wird hiermit ernstlich und bey einem Gulden Straf einem jeden verbotten, Amtmann, wenn er im Amt oder Gericht sizet und als ein Diener die Person seines Geehrteten Fürsten und Herrn präsentiert, keinen Vetter zu heißen, maßen ich weder Vetter, Sohn, Bruder, Schwager oder Vetter im Amt und Gericht bin, dahero man sich dessen wohl in Acht zu nehmen und des ohnnöthige Vetterlens reden unterlassen hat."

[21] The fixing of the tithe auction through collusive bidding was an older practice, but only during the middle of the eighteenth century did the ducal edicts see the parties to the collusion formed around kinship. The "Generalrescript in Betreff der Behandlung der Fruchtzehentverleihungen" from 6.6.1604, in: Vollständige, historisch und kritisch bearbeitete Sammlung der württembergischen Gesetze. Ed. A.L. REYSCHER 16. Stuttgart and Tübingen 1828 p.205, mentions "Parteien." See also "Generalreskript in Betr. der Beschränkung der Fruchtpacht-Nachlässe," from 3.6.1605, ibid., p.207. The "Zweite Zehend-Ordnung" refers to collusion, 27.6.1618, ibid., p.213. See also "Allgemeines Verbot von Partheilichkeiten bei dem Verkauf von Früchten auf den herrschaftlichen Kästen," 24.3.1623, ibid., p.359; "Generalreskript die sorgfältigere Wahrnehmung des herrschaftlichen Interessen beim Geldeinzug ...," 20.1.1624, ibid., p.361. The "Anordnung gegen die heimlichen Uebereinkünfte bei Zehendverleihungen," 24.4.1660, ibid., p.410–11: "... Undertanen ... seich heimlich separiren, zwo, drei oder mehr Rotten machen, und sich dergestalten mit einander vergleichen, daß wenn die eine Parthey dises Jahr den Zehenden bestanden, selbige Künfftiges Jahr zuruck gehen, und die andere Anstehen müssen ..." The first mention of kin in the ordinances comes from the "Allgemeine Vorschriften hinsichtlich der genaueren Wahrnehmung des herrschaftlichen Interesse bei der Frucht- und Wein-Verwaltung," 23.5.1735, ibid., p.591. See also "Allgemeine Vorschriften die Wahrung des herrschaftlichen Interesse bei Zehen- und Gulten-Verpachtungen betr.," 19.7.1736, ibid. The "Generalreskript des diesjährigen Ernd-Generale betr.," in REYSCHER 16, 2 p.16: "Die heimliche- und in Vorausverabredete Gemeinschaft eines Zehend-Pachts, welche sich öfters ganze Gemeinden, oder nach einem unter ihnen festgesetzten Turnus abwechslungsweise einzelne Parthien der Orts-Einwohnerschaft, zu offenbarem Schaden ..." And see finally the "Ernd-General-Rescript für das Jahr 1808 ...," 17.6.1808, in ibid., p.93.

[22] See complaints by Adam Falter and Hans Jerg Speidel, Gemeindearchiv Neckarhausen, Vogtruggericht 1, 29 (14. 12. 1751). Here the Nürtingen Vogt supported the village oligarchy and rigged bidding.

the politically powerful segment of the village, who in turn created a new system of politics based on controlling key village resources and manipulating the connection between the village and the state. Not until the 1780s did the extension of the system take place among the elite land holders as a class. They no longer stood as godparents to people below themselves in the hierarchy and sought for marriage partners only among their equals. They married their cousins, created overlapping networks of ritual kin, and began to dominate the market in land. It was during this period that classes began to be more articulated. Even then we have to be careful about class and how it operated. Given the demographics of many families and the economic difficulties of the period, children of wealthy families frequently inherited very little property and had to depend on wage labor or a handicraft to survive. Yet many of these ended up back in the class of substantial property owners. What allowed this to happen was the fact that they also inherited the kinship links and ties which their wealthy parents had constructed. Their strategical situation subsequently allowed them to accumulate resources over time.

Only around 1800 did the artisans and construction workers themselves finally adopt the new system of alliances. While landholders were marrying first cousins, they began to marry second cousins. But there was a difference. They tended to marry cousins in other villages, developing wide-spread geographical networks adapted to the conditions of mobile wage labor. By the 1820s, then, an oligarchy was well in place, with alliances stretching back to the 1740s.[23] They themselves were peasant cultivators for the most

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[23] The Württemberg laws had always forbidden close relatives to sit on the magistrate assemblies together, although there had always been the possibility of a dispensation. There does not seem to have been too much practical control until the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. According to the "3. Hofgerichtsordnung" of 1557, REYSCHER 4, p.109: "Urteiler ... und keiner Parthey, rathen, warnen, noch reden, und wa ime der Partheien eine mit Freundschaft oder Magschaft untz in vierdten grad verwandt, oder das er der sach gemein, nutz, teil, oder Schaden haben möcht ..." The "2. Landrecht" of 1567 objected to people serving on a Gericht who were related by blood, REYSCHER 4, p.192. In the "3. Landrecht" of 1610, REYSCHER 5, pp.3ff., it was forbidden to have two members of a Gericht who were related to each other as second cousins or as in-laws up to first cousins (3. Grad Blutsfreundschaft, 2. Grad Schwägerschaft). According to the "General Reskript, die unstatthafte Verwandtschaft der Stadt- und Amtsschreiber mit den Ober- und Stabsbeamten betr.", REYSCHER 6, p.668 (25. 7. 1786), these officials were not allowed to be or become closely related. This was specified more closely six years later in the "General Reskript, die unstatthafte Verwandtschaft der Stadt-, Amts-, und Kloster-Schreiber mit den Ober- und Stabs-Beamten betr.," ibid., pp.686–7 (19. 3. 1792), which said that they were not allowed to be related in the collateral line in the second degree of Verwandtschaft or Schwägerschaft. The "General-Reskript, die Beschränkung der Dispensationen von der Verwandtschaft zwischen Magistrats-Personen betr.," REYSCHER 14, p.1103–4 (13. 6. 1795): "Die Magistrate ... zum Theil aus mehreren

part and by this time had driven all but a few artisans from magistrate positions. The larger class of peasant cultivators dominated the land market and coordinated their agriculture by systematic exchanges with close kin. And the poorer artisans and wage earners moved over a larger territory bound together by a network of kin.

What does this analysis tell us about the continuities of the early modern period? I have emphasized a break beginning in the fourth or fifth decade of the eighteenth century. It was then that people began to speak of coordinate groups of cousins, and "Vetterle" became a term of central political and social importance. This can be shown for Württemberg as a whole by examining the commission reports which dealt with corruption scandals and political conflicts in various villages during the eighteenth century. I have examined several hundred of them and found the first appearance of the term during the 1750s.[24] The arrival of the novel expression in political language points to a break in social organization. However kinship was structured before this time, it did not involve familial endogamy, alliances between patrilines spanning several generations, or cooperation and coordination of production, politics, or landed resources through brothers-in-law and cousins who were of similar status and wealth.

What were the lineaments of kinship before the 1740s. This is harder to see, although there are hints in archival material which need to be studied systematically. I have stressed from the Neckarhausen material that kinship took the form of patronage/clientage, reformed in each generation through new marriage ties. If anything gave continuity over several generations to relations between particular houses, it was godparentage. It is not, however, that kinship played more or less of a role in the two periods but that it was structured so very differently in each. In the earlier period there are many examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where the ducal government mitigated punishment for a crime as long as the miscreant had a reliable Freundschaft. The kinless person was treated by the authorities

Personen bestehen, welche mit einander gegen die Verordnung unsers Landrechts ... verwandt sind ..." Such people were supposed to get dispensations, and those were not supposed to be given out lightly. The "K. Verordnung, die Dispensation von dem Verbot der Verwandtschaft unter den Mitgliedern der Gemeinde-Räte betr." in ibid., p.1202 (19. 8. 1819) said that to get a dispensation, the person had to be of excellent quality and get an absolute majority of votes. See also the "Erlaß des K. Justiz-Ministerium an den Pupillensenat des K. Obertribunals und Gerichtshofs in ... betr. die Dispensations-Erteilung von zu nahe Verwandtschaft, zum Behuf der Aufnahme in das Waisengericht oder in das Oberamts-Gericht," REYSCHER 7, p.1125 (4. 3. 1823). This contains a form for seeking a dispensation.

[24] Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HSAS), A214 Bü. 517. Dizingen. Die von Johannes Wielanden et cons. gegen den Schultheißen Johann Jacob Schweizer immediato angebrachte Delata ... 1755–56.

more severely and frequently was unable to build a protective network based on membership in a clan.

But reference to a clan is perhaps too much said for a social formation which is too little understood. A "clan" implies some kind of organization whose membership is recruited through inheritance and marriage and whose activities are coordinated through hierarchies based on age, or wealth, or ascriptive rules of precedence. I have found no evidence for kinship coordination beyond the networks developed by individuals out of various strands of patronage and ties of blood and marriage. Rather than an institutionalized clan-like organism, a Freundschaft seems to have been merely the shifting set of people in a particular person's orbit, an ego-focused network peculiar to that individual.

The contrast between the period before the 1740s and after can be illustrated by the way people talked about illicit partisanship among members of the village magistrates. Typical for the earlier period is an example from 1714–18, which has to do with the charges of several villagers against the newly elected Schultheiss of the village of Nehren.[25] Here the villagers complained that a particular member of the Gericht had too large a Freundschaft in the village community. The point was that he threatened to build a partisan group, and as a member of the Gericht coordinate their activity. Here was danger of a clientage system which would operate to the detriment of villagers less well connected. The petitioners listed individually all the people in the village who were related to the Schultheiß and noted the way godparentage was systematically used to build a *Partie*. "Auß diser vor geschribene Freindschafft ist zu Erachten, wie wirdt Es sich under der Burger Schafft Ein raisset, und also noch daglich vermehret, da doch schon vor viehlen Jahren darüber ist geclagt worden."

After 1740 or so, complaints and criticism operated on a completely different level. It is no longer the problem of a wide Freundschaft connected to a particular member of the magistrates but one of interlocking kinship between members of the magistrates themselves.[26] Only then would people

[25] HSAS.A 214 Bü. 921. Nehren. Georg Krauß gegen den Schultheißen Hans Hauser und cons. wegen Injurien. 1714–18.

[26] A good example comes from the 1790s: HSAS, A214 Bü. 1061. Klein Heppach. Untersuchung ... gegen den ... Magistrat ... 1791–99. From a report dated 21.1.1794: "Der erst Grund dieser Beschwerden ist in einer strittigen Richterswahl zu suchen da die Magistratsglieder wegen des newerwählten Richters, dem die nahe Verwandtschaft mit andern Richtern im Weg gestanden war, und der auch in Rucksicht der bereits unter den übrigen Richtern vorgewalteten Verwandtschafts-verbindungen die nachgesuchte Dispensation nicht erhalten hat, unter sich in Uneinigkeit gerathen hat." A deputation of the community listed the many ways the new Richter was related to members of the Gericht, among which were two brothers-in-law and three cousins. Since the Gericht itself coopted its own members, the few independent votes

speak of a "Vetterlesgericht" made up of cousins, brothers-in-law, uncles and nephews, and fathers-in-law connected to each other through the marriage of their children.

could not counter those of *Anverwandtschaft* and *Privat-Interesse*. The election of the new member was considered to be a "Vergroßerung unseres hiesigen Vetter-Gerichts." "So oft ein Gemeinds-Dienstle erledigt und ersezt wird, so hatten diese Vettern zusammen, und besezen daßelbe, unter hintansezung anderer ehrlicher Burgern, mit den Ihrigen, oder, wann diese famille bei Gericht etwas vorzubringen oder zu verhandlen hat, so sezt sie es mit der Mehrheit der – durch Verwandschaft aneinander gebundenen Stimmen zu ihrem Privat-Interesse immer durch und weder die übrigen zwei Richtern wenn sie es mit der Commun-Interesse und der burgern Wolfarth auch noch so gut meinen, noch wir Burgern, können bei allen Bemühungen Protestationen und Klagen nirgends durch dringen ..."

Familie, Verwandtschaft und soziale Ungleichheit: Der Wandel einer ländlichen Gesellschaft vom 17. zum 19. Jahrhundert

von

JÜRGEN SCHLUMBOHM

Daß die Familie elementare Bedeutung für die Gesellschaft insgesamt besitze, diese These ist seit den Anfängen der Sozialwissenschaften, ja in gewisser Weise bereits seit der antiken Philosophie immer wieder begründet worden, und zwar von ganz unterschiedlichen theoretischen und politischen Positionen her.[1] Wurden auf der einen Seite Ordnung und Gehorsam in der Familie als Basis für Stabilität und Herrschaft in Gesellschaft und Staat geschätzt, so betrachteten andere diesen Zusammenhang – den sie prinzipiell in ähnlicher Weise diagnostizierten – kritisch, und für einige verband sich die Vision einer auf Freiheit und Gleichheit beruhenden gesamtgesellschaftlichen Ordnung mit dem Postulat der Emanzipation von den Fesseln einer repressiven familialen Struktur.

Im Gegensatz zu solchen sozialpolitischen und sozialtheoretischen Auffassungen gibt es bei Historikern, insbesondere in Deutschland, eine als modern sich verstehende Vorstellung und Praxis von „Gesellschaftsgeschichte", in welcher die Familie durch ihre Abwesenheit auffällt. Es muß, so läßt sich aus einschlägigen Darstellungen schließen, wohl so etwas wie die Institution der Familie gegeben haben, etwa als Zeugungs- und Gebärma-

[1] Überblick bei H. R. SCHWEIZER u. a., Art. ‚Familie, Ehe', in: Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosphie. Hg. J. RITTER 2. Basel usw. 1972 Sp. 895–904; TH. MIES, Art. ‚Familie', in: Europäische Enzyklopädie zu Philosophie und Wissenschaften. Hg. H. J. SANDKÜHLER 2. Hamburg 1990 S. 15–53; D. SCHWAB, Art. ‚Familie', in: Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. Hg. O. BRUNNER u. a. 2. Stuttgart 1975 S. 253–301, hier bes. S. 287 ff.; G. SCHWÄGLER, Soziologie der Familie. Ursprung und Entwicklung (Heidelberger Sociologica 9). Tübingen 1970 S. 18 ff.; vgl. auch H. MARCUSE, Ideengeschichtlicher Teil, in: Studien über Autorität und Familie (Schriften des Instituts für Sozialforschung 5). Paris 1936 S. 136–228; J.-L. FLANDRIN, Familien. Soziologie-Ökonomie-Sexualität. Frankfurt/M. usw. 1978 S. 140 ff. – Die gegensätzlichen sozialpolitischen Positionen, die diese These teilen, können etwa durch Le Play und Riehl auf der einen, einige Frühsozialisten wie Fourier auf der anderen Seite exemplifiziert werden.