

Christopher H. Johnson, David Warren Sabean, Simon Teuscher and Francesca Trivellato (eds.), *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond. Experiences Since the Middle Ages*. New York and Oxford: Berghahnbooks. 2011, 362 pp., ISBN: 9780857451835.

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*Transregional and Transnational Families* is the third volume (some of) the editors produced to explore kinship relations in a wide variety of contexts against an equally wide time period. The editors and authors have truly proved to be pioneers in the study of family relations and the impact these relations had (or still have) in for instance the formations of political unions or the establishment of economic empires. The first volume to appear on the issue of kinship relations, *Kinship in Europe: approaches to long-term developments (1300-1900)*, was published in 2007 and focused on issues of power, property, gender and migration in general, though property and inheritance featured as the most prominent focal points. First to appear in 2011, before this present volume, was the second book in this 'kinship series', *Sibling Relations and the Transformation of European Kinship 1300-1900*. The editors again focused on property, power and gender, adding a second part discussing the more problematic or emotional side to sibling relations. Both these volumes are geographically limited to Europe and chronologically to the period before the world wars and the disintegration of the European empires. For historians of the European nobility and gender historians alike, these two volumes are almost mandatory reading. Where genealogical discussions had almost gone 'out of fashion' in these disciplines, the editors proved that without an intimate knowledge of the complex family relations in for instance Europe's aristocracy – including the position of wives, sisters, aunts and nieces – it is almost impossible to understand the major political or economic developments in these families and the dynasties they offered their loyalties to.

This next third volume leaves the 1300-1900 time period altogether and has a somewhat less euro-centred view point, with fourteen contributions from fifteen authors, ranging from fifteenth century noble families in Italy to twentieth century exiled Palestinian families. The use of the concept of 'transregional' or 'transnational' families opens up possibilities for the study not just of migration of family members, but also of families that transcend altogether the idea of 'bound-

aries', whether of a political, geographical or cultural nature. In their extensive introduction the editors note that their main focus was and is on European kinship relations, this time however placing them in a comparative perspective. The contributions again revolve around problems of property, power and the shift in kinship structures and are divided into two parts: 'The medieval and early modern experience' and the somewhat unfortunately named second part 'Modernity'. Although the editors have tried to maintain a chronological order in the contributions, roughly three main themes or clusters of chapters can be identified. First there is the cluster of chapters mainly concerned with the issue of migration. This cluster includes the chapters by Jose C. Moya (Chapter 1), Simon Teuscher (Chapter 4), Gisela Mettele (Chapter 8), Mary Chamberlain (Chapter 12), Stéphanie Latte Abdallah (Chapter 13) and Mario Rutten and Pravin J. Patel (Chapter 14). This cluster occupies the central place in this volume, and indeed some of the other chapters also discuss issues of migration, or a 'diaspora' of some sort.

In his first chapter Jose C. Moya abandons a political view point when attempting to define transnational families. Albeit maybe superfluously (at least to the early modernist), he points to the just 'recent' phenomenon of the nation-state, and thus to the limited use present day national boundaries (or indeed national identities) are when discussing issues of migration. Moya makes a case for 'migration' as a 'natural phenomenon', which exists at least since the Palaeolithic period and persists as a human necessity until our own century. By making Moya's article their first chapter (placed outside of the volume's chronological division), the editors clearly indicate that migration is their main focus in this volume, thereby almost assuming that transnational or transregional families mostly operate in a context of migration. This assumption does however not correspond with some of the other chapters, thus providing a somewhat confusing general outline.

Teuscher deals with a noticeable contradiction within patrician families of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Whereas researchers have been baffled by their remarkable talent in securing a monopoly on a city's offices for centuries – and thus creating a permanent local power base –, Teuscher argues that migration of family members and a specific patrician property regime was at the core of that local power. He bases his argument on the family chronicles of Burkhard Zink from Augsburg and Ludwig von Diesbach from Bern. Interestingly, these chronicles give details about the acquirement of property and wealth while at the same time serving to defend that wealth against claims of family members (as in the conflict with Zink and his son, p. 82). The author's best argument concerns his ideas on the impact of migration on family structures. Instead of seeing physical distance as a weakening of kinship structures, he proves that migration was a 'family affair', something that helped to keep the family together.

However far apart Gisela Mettele's subject may seem to that of Teuscher, she nonetheless addresses similar issues on migration or physical distance actually

strengthening kinship structures. In this case however, the author deals with the 'spiritual' kinship demanded by the Moravian Brethren. It is intriguing to read that members of this pietistic group were required to 'cast off' all ties to their blood relatives, in order to subject themselves to the strict community discipline that would ensure obedience and discipline within the group as a whole. Moravians held migration – or rather the ideal of a wandering existence – as their principle 'mission'. Therefore, personal property was excluded, as it would most likely 'tie' individual members to a certain territory. Moreover, new blood ties – marriages within the group or the bearing and education of children – were not to interfere with missionary activities. The "strong feeling of interconnectedness" (p. 162) between the Brethren crossed all possible frontiers, only to be confronted by an emerging national consciousness, most notably in the American colonies.

Such a feeling of – global – interconnectedness is what Mary Chamberlain sees as the defining mark of the African-Caribbean family identity and memory. Torn away from familiar social structures and kin relations to be forced into slave labour, Caribbean families grew along kinship structures that were often described in negative terms – if compared to the acceptable 'white' view on the ideal family life. Migration became a family concept, an acceptable and even necessary way of life, that in no means disrupted family structures. The idea and ideal of Caribbean family life stretched across continents and gave rise to a stable and strong social structure that was able to withstand several other 'forced migrations' or expulsions, even culminating in a culture of 'returning home' after several generations. The key factor of this narrative is the development of a specific family identity, strongly rooted in cultural practices and oblivious to either the necessity for integration in the adoptive country or the existence of political boundaries like nationalities.

Also concerned with disrupted family life or changing social and political conditions, is the chapter on Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan by Stéphanie Latte Abdallah. In this chapter the emphasis is equally on the emergence of a strong family identity which grew out of political and social frustration. Memory of family values and traditions as well as the self-representation of transnational families and their individual members is as much part of Abdallah's story as that of Chamberlain. Interestingly enough, both these stories give interesting and quite similar insights into gender roles in these 'dislocated' families. Although Caribbean families came to see migration as an opportunity whereas for the Palestinians it remains a story of a politically forced diaspora, women have seemed to create opportunities against a background of a disrupted family life. Although the adherence to 'tradition' is a strong conservative force mostly hostile to women's lives, camp conditions in the long run tore families apart, creating what Abdallah calls "families of women" (p. 276). "Popular feminism" (p. 291) among Palestinian women in Jordan was a direct result of women's choices not to remarry after

the rupture of a previous marriage, secondly of the independence they acquired to raise their own children and finally of the will to remain celibate expressed by many women of the third generations of refugees. The transnational enclave of Palestinians in Jordan – and especially its women – thus even came to challenge Jordan's alleged 'modernity'.

In many ways Mario Rutten and Pravin J. Patel's chapter on the interrelations between Patel migrants in Britain and their relatives in India mirror some of the conclusions of Chamberlains Caribbean analysis. Rutten and Patel undertook several surveys among villages and families of the Patidar community in Gujarat, as well as among their migrated relatives living in Greater London. The authors found that immigrant communities based their social life in the host country very much on Indian 'village life'. Pre-existing hierarchies are untouched by migration and form social circles that largely determine the individual immigrant's life, such as the choice of his marriage partner. Although it is concluded that the immigrants and their relatives in their home country do not constitute separate communities, at the same time they do not form a homogeneous group. Moreover, peaceful social contacts between these kin groups are not assured by frequent contact, on the contrary, conflicts do arise about the nature of their reciprocal relationship.

The second cluster consists of the chapters by Gabriel Pitterberg (Chapter 2), Francesca Trivellato (Chapter 6), Christine Philliou (Chapter 9), Christopher H. Johnson (Chapter 10) and David Warren Sabean (Chapter 11). Although these chapters also touch on the subject of migration and diaspora, they are mainly focussed around political or financial developments, such as the emerging nation state or the establishment of 'financial networks'.

The second chapter by Gabriel Pitterberg on Mamluk and Ottoman households introduces part 1 of the volume. It is interesting that the editors put this chapter dealing with the political household first in their chronological overview, since the elite political household largely functioned independent from kinship structures. The Mamluk household functioned as a military structure, which formed 'kinship' bonds between its members. Complicated bonds of fatherhood or brotherhood emerged to form a horizontal political elite that preceded actual blood ties and prevented the creation of a ruling 'dynasty'. Although in the Ottoman household dynastic inheritance was quite successful, the emergence of a 'nation state' was mainly due to the success of the political household of the vezir and its administrative structure, to the ultimate detriment of the Sultanate dynasty. Providing a further insight into Ottoman kinship society is Christine Philliou and her study on the Phanariot *hanedans* or households. The Phanariots were a Christian Orthodox elite deeply involved in Ottoman governance and thus provide an example more of integration than of migration. By emulating Ottoman examples of household-like structures while at the same time cultivating a

remarkable openness in for instance the choice of a marriage partner, Phanariots used a variety of strategies to build their powerful transregional networks. When frontiers were drawn after the Greek independence, Phanariots effectively became a transnational family, while at the same time losing their pre-eminence in Ottoman governance and diplomacy.

Trivellato compares two successful trading diaspora's adhering to different or even conflicting religious identities, namely Sephardic (Jewish) and Armenian (Christian) transregional families. In this sometimes overcomplicated read, she scrutinizes marriage and devolutionary practices – for instance levirate marriages and intergenerational endogamy for the Sephardim- and compares them to the business forms adapted by these families. She reaches the conclusion that the Sephardic business success is partly due to its less formalized and less centralized diaspora. They established relations – sometimes through the use of non-Jewish agents – across a wider geographical and political arena than the Armenians, who stayed within a close and closed family circle. Although the Armenians held the 'religious advantage', they nonetheless possessed only small and few settlements in Europe.

The analysis that Christopher Johnson provides in his often too anecdotal chapter is how nineteenth century regional elites, in this case from the city of Vannes in the Breton region, actively used kinship structures to become more and more involved in 'national' public service. By analysing the lives and careers of specific families – most prominently the Galles, the Jollivet and the Le Ridant – and their interfamilial bonds, he concludes that a careful strategy of expanding family networks beyond the local context – either by marriage, migration or education – was instrumental in creating a national identity (and loyalty) within that regional context. By stressing factors of integration of elites into the struggling French nation-state the author's story is much more about 'nationalism' than 'transnationalism', however important their exploits outside of the regional context may have been. Quite interesting is Johnson's discussion on the importance of 'influential aunts' in securing political contacts for their nephews or in providing them with marriage partners. His discussion can be linked to Hohkamp's previous chapters for this 'kinship cycle', as well as to Spangler's current analysis (Chapter 7) on the importance of 'border elites' in early modern state formation, as in many ways Brittany could be viewed as a border region. In that sense, an emerging 'national identity' among these nineteenth century border elites might be seen as a *conditio sine qua non* for the success of French state formation.

The last chapter in this politico-financial cluster is provided by David Warren Sabean and relates of the international success of the well-known Siemens family. He begins by describing the development of the Siemens family identity, closely linked with general cultural practices in the nineteenth century. The sudden emergence of family archives and extensive genealogies among the bourgeois elite

is said to be partly responsible for the construction of a family identity along the lines of an agnatically structured lineage. Intriguing is Sabea's account of how these families institutionalised themselves in informal associations (*Vereine*) or formal foundations (*Stiftungen*), as indeed the Siemens did. Funds thus amassed were for instance used to finance the education of family members or to help poorer relatives, with the exclusion of adopted children or descendants of female members. Emphasis was laid on the surname, thus cultivating an exclusively male identity, which nonetheless female family members (again wives, mothers, sisters and aunts) were responsible to uphold. The Siemens case illustrates the importance of male relations, or in this case more the close ties of brotherhood, in the establishment of a successfully international firm. The fact that these brothers acquired different national identities seemed secondary to their original social (in this case family) identity. On the other hand, the 'founder' of this industrial dynasty, the eldest brother Werner who in many ways acted more as a father than as a brother, stressed the importance of keeping family and business correspondence apart. Although this case demonstrates the importance of blood relatives for the expanding business and how family members were recruited to work in the company, it also points to the importance of keeping family conflicts out of the way of business interests.

What Sabea and Johnson both do very often is stress the exceptional developments in the nineteenth century, for instance when it comes to cousin marriages. This emphasis on the 'long nineteenth century' as standing apart from the period before or after becomes somewhat annoying. It seems strange that this volume should be concerned with providing a comparative perspective – at least geographically speaking – by adding non-European themes, when chronological continuity and indeed comparativity within European developments is thus almost excluded. Dare this reviewer suggest that Sabea might be wrong in thinking that "the dialectic between strong lineal recognition and the pragmatic use of networks constructed out of friends, allies, and consanguines" is a "major aspect of kinship relations of the nineteenth century" (p. 249)? If this collection of volumes has provided us with something, it is exactly with the fact that the strategy described here has been universally adapted throughout the centuries, within various social groups, and even outside of the European geographical sphere, depending on prevailing social and political circumstances.

Historians of the nobility will rejoice in the third cluster, consisting of chapters by Christina Antenhofer (Chapter 3), Michaela Hohkamp (Chapter 5) and Jonathan Spangler (Chapter 7). These chapters deal with the "supranational" (p. 138) nature of Europe's leading noble families, leaving behind them issues of migration or diaspora altogether. In that sense, they form an awkward addition to this volume, nonetheless offering an interesting challenge to the supposition that 'transnationality' should imply migration of families or family members.

Or as Jonathan Spangler put it: “It is important to consider, however, that many of these families can be considered as transregional not because they moved but because the frontiers moved across them” (p. 134).

In her chapter on the Gonzaga family networks Antenhofer creates her own interpretation of what signifies the ‘transnational’ or ‘transregional’ character of families, since she herself indicates the apparent anachronism of these concepts in a fifteenth century context. ‘Transregional’ are considered the marriages the Gonzaga arranged with other ‘Italian’ (but not the Papal) states – thus unfortunately creating another anachronism – and ‘transnational’ the marriages they contracted with French and ‘German’ noble families. It is surprising she would consider marriages within the empire – as both Mantua and for instance Brandenburg were of course part of the empire – as being ‘transnational’, considering they both offered their loyalty to the same dynasty and belonged to the same political structure. It is plausible the author bases this distinction on the cultural difference in (mostly) language between the Italian states and for instance the German states or the French monarchy, since she also briefly discusses issues of integration of ‘foreign’ brides at courts. What the author successfully argues is that the orientation towards transregional or transnational marriages depended on the specific political or social situation of the family or some of its members at the time they were contracted. The German princesses to be married off to the Gonzaga’s acted as a permanent link to the (rest of the) empire and an important source of information, since most of them were encouraged to keep regular contact with their families of origin. Striking is that mostly the women were married off to ‘foreign’ princes, which in fact proves their importance within the family structures – while mostly only the eldest son contracted a transnational or transregional marriage. The most important exception on the last rule was the marriage of the younger son Ludovico Gonzaga (1539-1595) who married the Marck-Cleves heiress of the duchy of Nevers, thus creating the Nevers-Gonzaga line.

Although Antenhofer produces a valuable chapter for the history of the nobility and its kinship structures – partly also for her inclusion of the visual arts as an important source for the identification of kinship strategies – it is Michaela Hohkamp who produces the best possible concepts for the study of these ‘supranational’ noble kinship networks. Abandoning the use of the terms ‘transnational’ or ‘transregional’, she introduces the concepts ‘translocal’, ‘transfamilial’ and most importantly ‘transdynastic’ to describe the aristocracy’s early modern practice of marrying outside of a particular territory, family (or pre-existing kinship relation) or ‘politico-dynastic’ loyalty. Hohkamp analyses a somewhat complicated set of data (and translates it into an equally complicated read) centred around the figure of the ‘princely aunt’ - who was at the same time a princely daughter, princely niece, princely wife or princely sister. Thus the author identifies multirelational - mostly horizontal - kinship structures that coincided with the probably ‘over-



emphasized' vertical kinship structures. These horizontal structures were held together by female relations and stretched across a huge geographical space, as well as a considerable number of Europe's principalities.

In Chapter 7, Spangler produces an intriguing comparison between mainly the high noble houses of Salm and Croy, although he includes many other examples of transregional nobles. It is clear from the start of this chapter, that Spangler uses the term 'transregional' exclusively for noble families originating from or focussing their attention on border regions such as Lorraine or the Southern Netherlands. The author addresses an important lack in the historiography on Europe's nobility, since most of the existing volumes seem to exclude or at least avoid devoting studies to these in some respects quite elusive families. Neither the Salm, nor the Croy – nor for that matter a considerable number of other border families – were easily defined in terms of national or territorial identity. On the contrary, both the Salms and the Croy's pursued an active policy of splitting up the family in multiple new family branches crossing political, cultural or religious borders. Although a common dynastic identity was transmitted, the family would thus be able to pursue military careers - or dynastic service in general - on opposite sides of Europe's main dynastic and religious divides. What further makes this chapter so interesting is Spangler's analysis of state formation processes, whereby monarchs very much depended on the loyalty of border nobles. In an era where frontiers could shift after every military victory, these nobles were instrumental in securing the loyalty of their entire patronage networks. Spangler takes the view that this also explains why their huge potential – so immensely necessary to early modern monarchs – became entirely obsolete in the nineteenth century nation state, where 'middlemen' were no longer needed to communicate with its subjects. This last view point is certainly open for discussion.

As much as the editing of this volume must have been a challenge to the editors, the first impression of migration as a prerequisite for transnationality or transregionality, as a problematic general outline, persists. With some quite notable exceptions (for instance David Warren Sabean himself in Chapter 11), many of the authors, as indeed the editors, have apparently avoided the use of 'identity' as a concept as much as possible. In several respects, that is a pity, because although identity is also a concept much (mis)used in the definition of 'nationality' – a path the editors clearly did not chose to take – still it presents a less problematic definition than that of 'transnationality' or 'transregionality'. The lack of a definition of these concepts which is able to cross chronological or political boundaries has forced the authors to provide their own definitions. As much as this can lead to interesting analyses, the outcome of this in the majority of the chapters has lead to the conclusion that transnationality or transregionality comes down to the formation of a specific familial, social or spiritual identity that defies borders of any kind, whether the state of a kin group's translocal activities was the



result of migration or not. In that sense, the volume seems to lack the coherence that the two previous volumes appeared to possess. Nevertheless, attempting to study kinship relations in all of its diversity, and especially in placing European narratives next to 'foreign' studies that seem to defy the prevailing European view on kinship structures is highly commendable and has led to the challenging of traditional historiography on the subject. Every chapter in itself has brought novel insights and together with the previous volumes this has resulted in a valuable series of volumes that should become mandatory reading for students of Europe's political past.