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INTRODUCTION

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1

An introduction to kinship

We need only as much theory as necessary.

– Jack Goody, *Expansive Moment*

During the three decades it took to put this study together, visions of Casaubon danced in my head, while all about me scholarly interest in population studies and in kinship analysis was on a steep decline.[1] With the recent loss of faith in social analysis, the basic weapons of the social historian's armament, such as "class," have been blunted or tossed aside. Yet I still find "class" a useful instrument, and in one way or another this book beats its way toward an argument that explains how kinship and class have interacted with each other during the modern era. The fact that these two concepts have been replaced in many disciplines by "identity" and "selfhood" has left me with the quixotic task of breaking a social-historical lance on the windmills of subjectivity.

In 1968 I set out to look at a relatively simple question arising from the widely held view among social scientists that modernization had fundamentally altered the nature of the family in Western civilization and that each social epoch was characterized by a dominant form of familial relations. People in Europe, so the story went, had once constructed their lives within a dense network of kin. Industrialization, urbanization, and monetization of social relations had allowed individuals and families to free themselves from traditional ties and enter into rationally calculated entrepreneurial activities or, by moving whenever necessary, to take up the opportunity to sell their labor in a free-wage market. Experts in development offered this successful transition in the West as a model for backward countries to emulate. In a future world economy premised on the tactical

[1] See Signe Howell and Marit Melhuus, "The Study of Kinship; The Study of Person; A Study of Gender," in Teresa del Valle, ed., *Gendered Anthropology* (London, 1993), pp. 38–53, here p. 39; and Jane Fishburne Collier and Sylvia Junko Yanigisako, "Introduction," in Collier and Yanigisako, eds., *Gender and Kinship: Essays towards a Unified Analysis* (Stanford, 1987), pp. 1–13, here p. 1. All of these authors want to revitalize kinship in the light of new understandings about gender, a point that will be partly documented in this book.

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versatility of the nuclear family, obligations to extended kin were seen as a liability.

My question was twofold. First, I wanted to know if the generally accepted account of the European past was correct and what specific form the transition had taken – I was skeptical about offering an ill-conceived and little-understood model for underdeveloped areas of the world to emulate. Second, I wanted to know how the connections between and among families were patterned during the long pretransition period in which relations between people were supposed to have been dominated by a web of kinship. In a certain sense, where everyone is kin, no one is kin; that is to say, all the connections between kin could hardly carry the same meaning, moral exigency, or attitude. So the problem was to find a way to map the territoriality of kin in some particular context where there was enough detail to be specific about the degree to which people shaped their everyday lives with and without family and relatives.[2] There was also a complex hermeneutic problem to be solved, which Françoise Zonabend has effectively sketched: "Ethnologists have shown that in those societies called archaic, people 'disguise social and political maneuvers under the cloak of kinship' [in the words of Lévi-Strauss]. We could ask whether our societies, called modern, do not attempt to disguise the genealogical imperatives of alliance under the cloak of politics and economics."[3] I came to see in the course of this study that the distribution of property cannot be explained without an understanding of kinship, and that the same is true of the structure of households, the division of labor, and the deployment of authority. I also found that a thoroughgoing analysis of kinship could help rehabilitate class and lead to a subtler understanding of women's political practice, especially in the nineteenth century, which was when women supposedly disappeared into the realm of the private and therefore became effectively cut off from activity in the public sphere, the only "true" arena of political engagement.

In the late 1960s there were two tools at hand for investigating the kinds of questions that family and modernization posed. One consisted of parish registers. A decade earlier Etienne Gautier and Louis Henri had developed a method for examining demographic behavior at the village level that involved "reconstituting" individual families by a systematic exploitation of baptism, marriage, and burial registers.[4] I thought that it might be possible to develop just such a grid

[2] Since I began this study, there has been a great deal of research on family ideology, on the structure of households, and on demographic patterns. Accounts of the literature can be found in Tamara Hareven, "The History of the Family and the Complexity of Social Change," *American Historical Review* 96 (1991): 95–124; and Richard L. Rudolph, "The European Peasant Family and Economy: Central Themes and Issues," *Journal of Family History* 17 (1992): 119–38.

[3] Françoise Zonabend, "Le très proche et le pas trop loin: Réflexions sur l'organisation du champ matrimonial des sociétés structures de parenté complexes," *Ethnologie française* 11 (1981), pp. 311–18, here pp. 316–17.

[4] Etienne Gautier and Louis Henry, *La population de Crulai, paroisse normande: Etude historique*, Institut national d'études demographique, Travaux et Documents, Cahiers 33 (Paris, 1958). See also Louis Henry, *Manuel de démographie historique*, Hautes études medievales et modernes, 3 (Geneva, 1967). Cf. D. E. C. Eversley, Peter Laslett, and E. A. Wrigley, eds., with contributions by

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in this study, but that I should add to it tax and land registers, debt and sale records, mortgage files – all kinds of lists – as well as minutes and protocols from police investigations and judicial hearings. As Jacques Dupâquier and Tony Wrigley later suggested, and as Hans Medick now has brilliantly demonstrated, expanded family reconstitutions could provide social historians with their own microscopes.[5] The second tool was a "genealogical" method that social anthropologists employed in their rich and fascinating literature on kinship. This method offered the necessary conceptual instruments and suggested the paths to follow in parsing the syntax of linkages turned up by family reconstitution.[6] The fact that anthropology was usually based on close observation of everyday life in small localities offered a genial complement to a social-historical strategy based on records from a single village. By blending the practices of these two disciplines, I felt that the microhistorical approach of this study would surely produce exciting results.

Locating a suitable community to examine did not take a great deal of time. I wanted to find a village in southern Germany, since I was already familiar with the sources and archives in that area. I also wanted to find a village with traditional three-field agriculture and mixed stock and grain production, one of strong peasant character and not affected very much, at least in the eighteenth century, by protoindustrialization.[7] The village had to be large enough to offer a variegated social life but small enough – so I thought – not to overwhelm the researcher with source material. But in the case of Neckarhausen, the Württemberg village I naively stumbled across, there happened to be between 300,000 and 500,000 pages of documents, far more, it turned out, than I had bargained for or could ever hope to exploit.

W. A. Armstrong and Lynda Overall, *An Introduction to English Historical Demography from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1966).

[5] See the references in Hans Medick's introduction to *Weben und Ueberleben in Laichingen 1650–1900. Lokal geschichte als allgemeine Geschichte* (Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1996): "Entlegene Geschichte? Lokalgeschichte als micro-historisch begründete allgemeine Geschichte." For an introduction to kinship analysis with historical materials, see Andrejs Plakans, *Kinship in the Past: An Anthropology of European Family Life 1500–1900* (Oxford, 1984).

[6] The term goes back to W. H. R. Rivers, "The Genealogical Method of Anthropological Enquiry," *Sociological Review* 3 (1910): 1–12, repr. in *Kinship and Social Organization*, London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology, 34 (London, 1968). Ernest Gellner, "The Concept of Kinship, With Special Reference to Mr. Needham's 'Descent Systems and Ideal Language,'" *Philosophy of Science* 17 (1960): 187–204, sees kinship structure as the manner in which a pattern of physical relationships is made use of for social purposes. Although his position has been challenged by Needham and others, I cannot see how kinship can mean anything if it does not mean at least this.

[7] After working on Neckarhausen for a decade, I joined a research group devoted to microhistorical approaches to protoindustrialization at the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen. The three community studies that came out of the project demonstrate the fruitfulness of the approach. See Jürgen Schlumbohm, *Lebensläufe, Familien, Höfe: Die Bauern und Heuersleute des Osnabrückischen Kirchspiels Belm in proto-industrieller Zeit, 1650–1860*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 110 (Göttingen, 1994); Peter Kriedte, *Eine Stadt am seidenen Faden. Haushalt, Hausindustrie und soziale Bewegung in Krefeld in der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Veröffentlichungen des MPI für G., 97 (Göttingen, 1991); Hans Medick, *Weben und Ueberleben*.

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I dealt with the economic and institutional history of the village in an earlier study, *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen*. That book considered the "internal" workings of the family – relations between husbands and wives and parents and children – in the context of traditional farming and the exigencies of the agricultural revolution, inheritance, the domestic estate, and a developing market for land. This book deals with the relationships between households and between individuals beyond the nuclear family, and with the "external" workings of the family in the larger network of kin. The original intent was to follow kinship patterns from the beginnings of parish registers in the 1550s to the end of the eighteenth century, but richer source material and the chance to follow issues across the "traditional" and "modern" divide shifted the focus to the period between 1700 and 1870. The ability to study genealogies at a suitable depth has been made possible by a family reconstitution from 1558 to 1869, which provides a genealogical grid of more than 4,000 families.[8] Such a study may look like a natural candidate for computer analysis, but that is not as straightforward as it may seem.

I began the study at a time when computers were more adept at processing the data of physicists than of poets. Conceptually and physically, all that a social historian could hope for then was fixed-format keypunching of a set of variables onto holerith cards. In the hope of future developments in computer technology and systems analysis and with the help of various programmers, I devised a free-format entry system that took hours of computer time on large university installations. Eventually, the machine-readable data were transferred from the punch cards to magnetic tapes, then to central-facility fixed disks, and finally to personal computer floppy, laser, and hard disks, which became part of an experiment to develop the historical database "Kleio" at the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen.[9] During each of these stages, however, my interest was fixed on the ever-growing amounts of data and their analysis and not on the rapidly changing computer technology. The consequences and limitations of that choice, as well as many of the presuppositions of the analysis, are discussed in the appendix. Although all of the data are machine readable and although while in Göttingen I was able to generate several hundred genealogies by computer, I have not mastered the technology that would allow me simply to sit at a desktop computer and create any particular genealogy. Rather than invest long periods of time to make that possible, I always found it preferable to work out a table or follow a genealogy by hand through the printed-out family reconstitution to answer the burning question of the moment. I do not want to devote further space here to the technical details but merely wish to indicate the scope of the study and its intellectual cast: this is hard-core social history, and the reader

[8] An account of the set of sources can be found in the appendix.
[9] The system was developed by Manfred Thaller. For an introduction, see Peter Becker and Thomas Werner, *Kleio. Ein Tutorial*, Halbgraue Reihe zur historischen Fachinformatik, Serie A: Historische Quellenkunde, Band 1, 2d ed. (St. Katharinen, 1991).

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should be warned before proceeding that he or she will not come out of the experience unaroused.

The original intent of this study was simply to map the set of kin relations for a particular "premodern" European population. (Categories of "modern," "traditional," and the like became radically destabilized in the course of the undertaking, even though they did not altogether disappear.) The conceptual tools and ways of thinking about kinship were developed primarily through considerable reading of British social anthropology, and in one way or another the strongest line of influence came from A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Meyer Fortes, mediated through the work of and conversations with Jack and Esther Goody. The strength of that tradition seems to lie in its stress on "jural" relations, ranging from the social implications and cultural meanings of formal inheritance systems to both the institutionalized and the informal realms of rights, duties, claims, and obligations.[10] A great deal of the social world can be encompassed when one can give a systematic account of the claims people make on one another and the obligations they assume.[11] I do think that one needs to start there and not assume that kinship encompasses a particular domain, with particular properties in its own right.[12] Kinship is embedded in a range of economic, political, and cultural phenomena and does not have an inherent meaning or a particular field of activity subject to its own rules or norms. Like Edmund Leach in his study of Pul Eliya, I usually view kinship in Neckarhausen as essentially "another way of talking about property relations," but perhaps it is best to take a less preprogrammed view and regard kinship as an "idiom" through which a great many relations are conceptualized and a great many transactions are negotiated.[13]

[10] Jane Fishburne Collier and Sylvia Junko Yanigisako, "Toward a Unified Analysis of Gender and Kinship," in Collier and Yanigisako, eds., *Gender and Kinship*, pp. 14–50, here p. 29, want to support the notion that gender and kinship studies are concerned with understanding rights and duties that order relations between people defined by difference.

[11] The kind of detailed ethnography that Meyer Fortes presents in *Web of Kinship among the Talensi: The Second Part of an Analysis of the Social Structure of a Trans-Volta Tribe* (Oxford, 1949), or work of the caliber of J. van Velson's *Politics of Kinship: A Study in Social Manipulation Among the Lakeside Tonga* (Manchester, 1964) fulfills, I think, Pierre Bourdieu's injunction to treat kinship as something people make and with which they do something. He suggests looking at kinship in terms of the practices kin produce: *Outline of the Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 35–6. The emphasis on rights and obligations keeps power as a central aspect of kinship. The tradition here ultimately traces back to Maine: see Elman R. Service, *A Century of Controversy: Ethnological Issues from 1860 to 1960* (Orlando, 1985), p. 5.

[12] Collier and Yanigisako, "Toward a Unified Analysis," p. 35, argue against asking how rights and obligations are mapped onto kinship bonds and instead suggest asking how specific societies recognize claims and allocate responsibilities.

[13] Edmund Leach, *Pul Eliya: A Village in Ceylon* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 305, argues that the reality of kinship where he carried on research is found in its relationship to land and labor. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline*, p. 35, makes the point that genealogical relations are never strong enough to determine relations between individuals on their own. There has to be shared interest or a "common possession of a material and symbolic patrimony." David M. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor, 1984), p. 8, insists that the "arbitrary segregation of a rubric like 'kinship', taken out of the context of the whole culture, is not a very good way to understand how

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Scholars tend to judge the extent to which kinship dominates a society from the range of overlap between a particular set of genealogical relations and some other set of functions. In Württemberg rural society, for example, in the course of the eighteenth century peasants were increasingly forced to seek credit to capitalize their holdings and to pay for ever more expensive new parcels of land. Mortgage money did not come from fellow villagers but from outside investors: merchants, pastors, officials, rentiers, and widows. It might be possible to argue that the function of credit was disentangled from kinship and to tally all such functions to determine roughly how much or how little kinship counted. But the problem is not so easily solved. In this example, it turns out that all mortgage applications went through a village mortgage committee composed of several members of the court (*Gericht*), and later the village council (*Gemeinderat*). The linking up of a particular landholder with outside capital was always monitored and controlled by village officials charged with judging the creditworthiness, solvency, and honor of their fellow villagers and was made possible by other members of the community who were prepared to risk their own property by guaranteeing payment of a loan. Through this kind of institutional arrangement, kinship and the hierarchy of familial reputation played a fundamental role in villager access to outside funds. Furthermore, it was quite possible for kin to manipulate the relationship through a variety of strategies, some of which are discussed in this book. The point is that kinship is not a special domain of obligations and rights (in this case, the obligation of kin to lend to one another), of emotional commitment and "amity," but is itself a set of connections that vary not only from society to society but within each society itself.[14] But this view of kinship does not put to rest all the issues. Each society has different systems or bundles of relations, which set up coherent patterns of their own. Pierre Bourdieu conceptualizes such sets in spatial

a culture is structured." Hildred Geertz and Clifford Geertz, *Kinship in Bali* (Chicago, 1975), p. 3, think of kinship as an "idiom," not an autonomous system. Schneider, *Critique*, p. 19, uses the concept as well. For my argument about property, see "Aspects of Kinship Behaviour and Property in Rural Western Europe before 1800," in Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, and E. P. Thompson, eds., *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200–1800* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 96–111; "Unehelichkeit: Ein Aspekt sozialer Reproduktion kleinbäuerlicher Produzenten: Zu einer Analyse dörflicher Quellen um 1800," in Robert Berdahl et al., eds., *Klassen und Kultur: Sozialanthropologische Perspektiven in der Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt, 1982), pp. 54–76; (with Hans Medick) "Interest and Emotion in Family and Kinship Studies: A Critique of Social History and Anthropology," in Hans Medick and David Warren Sabean, eds., *Interest and Emotion: Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 9–27; *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 17–19, 31–4, 422–7.

[14] The notion of "amity" comes from Meyer Fortes, "Kinship and the Axiom of Amity," in *Kinship and the Social Order. The Legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan* (Chicago, 1966), pp. 219–49. The point I am making here is similar to Maurice Bloch's Madagascar example in "The Long Term and the Short Term: The Economic and Political Significance of the Morality of Kinship," in Jack Goody, ed., *The Character of Kinship* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 75–87. In this situation, moral commitment constitutes kinship, and kin can be relied upon over the long haul. In order to maximize the group of contacts, however, people put a great deal of work into relations with nonkin on a day-to-day basis, working with short-term balanced reciprocity.

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terms, suggesting that each has its own habitual behavior and strategic possibilities, which overlap and reinforce the others at various points.[15] Whatever patterns of relations and moral commitments a particular society establishes among kin provides a set of values and an arena of discourse in which an individual can negotiate.[16] Claims made on others on the basis of kinship have to be understood both in terms of the internal coherence of the kinship system in a particular context and in terms of the connection of kinship to other patterns of social and cultural life.[17]

The major alternative to the British functionalist school (Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and their students) in the 1960s was offered by the French structuralists, who were little concerned with the practical everyday web of social and familial relations. Edmund Leach took Lévi-Strauss to task for this: "The reciprocities of kinship obligation are not merely symbols of alliance, they are also economic transactions, political transactions, charters to rights of domicile and land use. No useful picture of 'how a kinship system works' can be provided unless these several aspects or implications of the kinship organization are considered simultaneously."[18] Building on Marcel Mauss's essay on the gift and taking a cue from Saussurian linguistics, Lévi-Strauss developed a theory of exchange that focused the discussion of kinship on marriage and marriage alliance.[19] In some ways, his work was an elaborate theory of communication based on the idea that women circulate between groups of men in accordance with patterned systems of reciprocity. Other anthropologists were quick to point out that the exchanging groups are frequently composed of men and women together and that it is not always young women who are exchanged.[20] It seems a mistake to abstract one moment out of a larger context of exchanges and isolate exchange itself from production and property relations. Furthermore, in structuralist ac-

[15] See, e.g., Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," *Theory and Society* 14 (1985): 723–44.

[16] See Collier and Yanigisako, "Introduction," p. 6. Geertz and Geertz, *Kinship in Bali*, p. 31, view kinship as "only one mode of ordering rights and duties which must adjust to counterbalancing pressures and pulls of other modes."

[17] Geertz and Geertz, *Kinship in Bali*, p. 156, argue against the notion of a "kinship system" because it assumes that the "ordering principles of a society are partitionable into natural kinds only adventitiously connected." Bourdieu would respond that the adventitious connection is the advantageous point. But he would agree with their idea that the importance of kinship symbolization varies from society to society. Furthermore, he would argue against Geertzian cultural holism and suggest that the variation is from class to class and family to family; see Bourdieu's "Social Space." See also Collier and Yanigisako, "Introduction," p. 6.

[18] Edmund R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology, 22 (London, 1961), p. 90.

[19] On this point and the contrast between Lévi-Strauss and Radcliffe-Brown, see Service, *Century of Controversy*, pp. 89–97.

[20] Jack Goody, "Marriage Prestations, Inheritance and Descent in Pre-Industrial Societies," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 1 (1970): 37–54. For a summary of the problems, see also Christine Gailey, *Kinship to Kingship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands* (Austin, 1987), pp. 10–15.

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counts, young women were not treated as right-bearing persons.[21] As Christine Gailey notes:

> Marriage exchanges, like household arrangements, are not the "core" of any kin-based culture. Even in patrilineal societies where women do leave their natal groups upon marriage, ties to the natal group are not necessarily broken with marriage: they can be transformed, expanded, or activated at strategic times. The claims established with marriage are far more complex than structuralists have indicated. . . . To reduce this complexity to women mediating men's communication does not help our understanding of this range of claims.[22]

In the view of Radcliffe-Brown, social relations among kin are extensions of relations among siblings. The principle of the "unity of the sibling group" allows for different configurations of sibling pairs according to birth order, age, and gender, but whatever the constellation of emotional attachments, they provide foundations for the extension of sentiment to other kin.[23] Without subscribing to his psychological assumptions about kinship construction, we might well find that sibling relations provide essential building blocks for structuring kinship.[24] In eighteenth-century Neckarhausen, for example, productive, market, and political processes appeared to crystallize out of the web of kin a particular emphasis on brothers – which provided the agnatic twist (emphasizing relatives through the father's side) inside a cognatic system (emphasizing relatives through both

[21] This is one of the essential insights running through the work of Jack Goody.

[22] Gailey, *Kinship to Kingship*, p. 13.

[23] Françoise Héritier, *L'exercice de la parenté* (Paris, 1981), pp. 36–53, took up this point and adapted it to structural analysis, arguing that the identity of siblings of the same sex and the difference of siblings of the opposite sex lie at the origin of the fundamental mechanisms of alliance. Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 136, sees the "unity of the sibling group" as a fundamental underlying feature of Germanic kinship reckoning. In *The Oriental, the Ancient, and the Primitive: Systems of Marriage and the Family in the Pre-Industrial Societies of Eurasia* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 10, he questions the extension of sentimental bonds as the explanation for structural features of a system (vs. Fortes) and places the emphasis on property.

[24] Marilyn Strathern, *After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 134, suggests that the assumption that lies behind English understanding of kinship is that relatedness is about being close. But what one finds among coordinated kin in the nineteenth-century German middle classes, for example, does not suggest that emotional proximity was at all necessary (see Jürgen Kocka, "Familie, Unternehmer und Kapitalismus. An Beispielen aus der frühen deutschen Industrialisierung," *Zeitschrift für Unternehmergeschichte* 24 (1979): 99–135, here p. 124). Jill Dubisch, "Gender, Kinship and Religion: 'Reconstructing' the Anthropology of Greece," in Peter Loizos and Evthymios Papataxiarchis, eds., *Gendered Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece* (Princeton, 1991), pp. 29–46, here pp. 39–40, looking at a different dyad – mother/daughter – regards the relationship as culturally constituted and not based on sentiment. J. D. Freeman, "On the Concept of the Kindred," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 91 (1961): 192–220, here p. 209, wrote: "Kindred relations cannot, I believe, be accounted for as simple extension of the sentiments which develop in the nuclear family. . . . What is basic is the fact that relations between kindred are governed by a special morality arising from the recognition of common descent." For a recent account that builds on Radcliffe-Brown's notion of sentiment and incorporates Lacan, see Margaret Trawick, *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family* (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 141–2, 152–4.

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parents). In the course of the nineteenth century, the core relations inside the sibling group came to be centered on the brother/sister (B/Z) constellation, which moved women into a central position in the practical construction of kin relations.[25] But the shift presents a more general problem, since the brother/sister became the key sibling dyad throughout the property-holding classes around 1800.[26] It may well be that we cannot provide a completely satisfactory explanation for such broad cultural shifts, but we can explore their consequences and compare the shape of social relations from class to class.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, kinship articulated with political processes and with the state in ever changing ways. In the eighteenth century, states went to considerable trouble to relax marriage rules prohibiting cousins and brothers and sisters-in-law from marrying one another, which left those families closely tied up with state service – among others – free to create tightly overlapping bonds of reciprocity and long-enduring alliances. At the same time and parallel to this development, an ever sharper discourse condemned the peculiar form of nepotism built around networks of cousins (*Vettern*). I will argue that these two things are closely related. In Neckarhausen and throughout Württemberg villages, the critical term *Vetterle* appeared in the 1740s, precisely at the time that politically powerful groups in the village began to marry their second cousins, thereby creating interlocking syndicates to control the distribution of village resources more tightly. What went on at the village level was paralleled at the regional and state level. By the end of the eighteenth century, with the most prosperous elements of the society in the vanguard, closer forms of exchange had developed between allied families, while the critique of corruption – the illegitimate intermingling of private and public concerns – had reached a peak.[27] The political battle seems to have come to a head during the 1820s. After that date most of the stories told by historians cease to concern themselves with corruption and nepotism, and consequently with kinship. Once the crucial distinction between public and private became part of the basic assumptions of the politically active classes, interest in the private practices of families, except for

[25] Héritier, *L'exercice,* p. 38, argues that the cross-sex sibling solidarity is never so strong as the parallel-sex one. But the shift to the B/Z attachment in Europe during the Romantic period belies this generalization.

[26] See David Warren Sabean, "Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and the Question of Incest," *Musical Quarterly* 77 (1993): 709–17. See also Leonore Davidoff, "Where the Stranger Begins: The Question of Siblings in Historical Analysis," in *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 206–26.

[27] I want to take the private/public distinction in the nineteenth century as constitutive of the kinship system that emerged during that period. The problem anthropologists now deal with has to do with the distortions of that legacy for current analysis. Rayna Reiter has made this point – see Collier and Yanagisako, "Toward a Unified Analysis," p. 19. See also Marilyn Strathern, *After Nature,* pp. 188–90. John Camaroff, "*Sui genderis*: Feminism, Kinship Theory, and Structural 'Domains,' " in Collier and Yanigisako, eds., *Gender and Kinship*, pp. 53–85, here p. 65, associates suggestively the public/private dichotomy with class formation, a point I will take up in the conclusion.

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