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Mario I. Aguilar (University of St. Andrews)

From age-sets to friendship networks: The continuity of soda among the Boorana of East Africa

Within the anthropological study of kinship and friendship there is the danger of stressing one or the other following anthropological fashions. Thus, if from the beginnings of social anthropology as a social methodology kinship was over stressed, the contemporary study of friendship can also become a fashionable subject.

In this paper that follows my previous study on friendship among Boorana high-school students (Aguilar 2000) I attempt to locate the study of Boorana and indeed African friendship within the development of social structures of descent and alliance. The Boorana had a very strong system of kinship structured through age-sets and age-grades within a structural sociability known as the gada system. While the system is not any longer viable within politics it permeates relations between male and female, kin (soda) and enemies, Boorana and non-Boorana.

Therefore this paper locates the relation between kinship and friendship in a parallel stream of sociability in which the Boorana perceive the two social categories as identical, while outsiders perceive them as different. The paper’s conclusions argue that (i) if friendship is a culturally constructed category that develops through social action, any study of its social manifestations requires the methodological assumption that any study of social performances of friendship also require a diachronic study of kinship; and (ii) friendship is part of an extended social structure that allows social integration for members that have experienced dissociation.
Mario I. Aguilar is Dean of the Faculty of Divinity at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. He is the author of Being Oromo in Kenya (1998), The Rwanda Genocide (1998) and editor of The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa (1998).

Alice Bellagamba (Università del Piemonte Orientale, Turin)

Trust between people: Dependence, history and the articulation of society along the river Gambia

In the 1960's the functionalist representation of African societies as ordered systems of values and norms, cemented together by kinship relations and by the inertia of custom, was gradually replaced by a more dynamic perspective, which favoured the analysis of interpersonal relationships, alliances and other forms of contractual bond between groups and individuals. In this, Balandier's (1971) work was seminal, as he pointed out the need to see society more as constructed than given, a system which changes through time, marked by different and stratified temporalities. Then, in the 1970's and the early 1980's, scholarly attention was attracted by the symbolic dimensions of social life, and by patron-client relationships as a key to the study of political action, although the theoretical ideas developed in the study of the Middle-East and the Mediterranean failed to be thoroughly extended to the analysis of African societies (see for instance Eickelmann 1979; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984). Recently Guyer (2000) lamented the lack of an innovative paradigm which could take into account the complexities of past and present African societies, after the demise of the functionalist perspective. In her analysis of pre-colonial equatorial societies she has used the term 'composition', in order to explain how differences were valorised and then mobilised towards a common end, within given social and economic spaces, i.e. families, village communities, reigns, commercial networks. Equatorial societies seem to have favoured both connection and multiplicity, thus playing a dynamic synthesis between continuity and the need for innovation. Actually in Guyer's perspective an 'anthropology of articulation' would address with a more systematic theory the inventive and creative dimensions of African social life.

In this paper I will bring a contribution to the above mentioned discussion analysing a specific ethnographic case. Commenting through an analysis of oral sources and colonial documents the historical development of a commercial town located along the River Gambia, I will illustrate the institution of 'karafoo' - a Mandinka word which means 'entrustment' - trying to explain the changes through time of its social and cultural meaning. It is my belief that the concept of 'karafoo', as embodied in memory and social practice, helps to imagine and deploy alliances, partnerships and networks (Rosen 1984: 181; Bellagamba 2000), and thus it brings within society a core of trust and mutual solidarity, however negotiated it might be.
Mark Breusers (University of Amsterdam)

Friendship and other affective non-kinship relations among Mossi and Fulbe in Burkina Faso

The population of the north-central region of Burkina Faso, where field research for this paper was carried out, consists mainly of Mossi (about 80 per cent). Settlements of Fulbe, who make up about ten per cent of the population, are interspersed among the Mossi villages. Although the Mossi population group is internally differentiated on an autochthon-stranger continuum, the Fulbe are considered strangers ‘par excellence’. The issue of friendship and other affective non-kinship relations is crucial for the understanding of the social integration of Fulbe in this region.

Among both groups kinship is a factor of primary importance in nearly all domains of social life. Mossi villages generally consist of several wards, each being composed of a number of compounds closely related to one another by paternal or maternal ties and the ward being the entity where the most intensive social interactions take place.

Likewise, Fulbe settlements consist of a limited number of gure (sing. wuro; group of huts) inhabited by families most often more or less closely related through kinship. Access to ritual and political office as well as land tenure are governed to a large extent by kinship-based rules and procedures.

Despite the seemingly overriding importance of kinship, many aspects of daily social life as well as the reproduction of certain political, social and ritual institutions, cannot be fully grasped without taking into account more or less institutionalised non-kinship relations such as, for instance, joking or mythical kinship. This paper focuses on friendship and other affective non-kinship relations such as godparenthood. After a brief introductory note on the social organisation of Mossi and Fulbe, the meaning and significance of these - at least initially - dyadic relations internal to each of the groups are outlined.
Subsequently, an analysis is presented of inter-group friendship and godparenthood. Issues that are addressed are: in what circumstances are friendship relations between Mossi and Fulbe established; how and why do inter-group friendship and godparenthood differ in meaning and significance from intra-group friendship and godparenthood; what is the relative importance of affection and utilitarian motivations in the establishment of such relations; in what circumstances do these relations go beyond two individuals to encompass families or networks; what is their significance for inter-group relations and how are they affected by wider processes of change such as the shift from farming to livestock keeping among Mossi, migration and socio-economic differentiation? In the conclusion the integrative and the boundary-maintaining aspects of these relations are discussed.

Youssouf Diallo (MPI for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale)

The Fulbe and their neighbours: On joking relationships in Western Burkina Faso

The paper discusses joking relationships in western Burkina Faso. It looks into the intra and inter-ethnic levels and provides an attempt at answering the following questions: who jokes with whom, why, and about what? In western Burkina Faso, joking relationships are a mode of belonging linking together individuals or different groups living in a multi-ethnic configuration. Joking partners maintain ties of friendship characterised by mutual aid and exchange of services. The joking relationships imply also conflict avoidance and play, at least from a functionalist perspective, a role of integration of joking partners. In farmer-pastoralist relations the institution is used for conflict resolution. This paper will focus on the relationships between the Fulbe and their (non-Fulbe) joking partners including castes groups such as blacksmiths, griots, leather workers, etc.

Martine Guichard (MPI for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale)

Reflections on anthropological studies of friendship

As Allan already pointed out in 1979, it is far easier to find out who a person’s kin are than to find out who his or her friends are. This is particularly true for situations where relatives are also friends. Because these friends are referred to as kin in everyday speech, the sympathy they feel for each other can be easily overlooked by social scientists, including anthropologists. Although the overlapping of kinship and friendship has long been noted, its significance is still difficult to evaluate. In the literature on Africa too, it seems either
over- or under-emphasized. This state of affairs is certainly linked to methodological difficulties in the study of friendship. But it is all the more problematic as it is also related to ethnocentric conceptions of friendship reflected in actors’ descriptions and interpretations or in theoretical assumptions. In this presentation I will discuss these questions. Another focus will be the ambivalence between closeness and distance in friendship relations.

References

Tilo Grätz (MPI for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale)

The thrusts of friendship among migrant gold-miners in Northern Benin

My paper deals with friendship relations among groups of male artisanal gold miners in West Africa, exemplified by case studies from Northern Benin.

I will argue that friendship is an important category in understanding the social configurations in the mining region. This contention may be surprising, given the fact that gold miners are portrayed above all as selfish, driven by greed, violence and mutual distrust. Without ignoring or downplaying the many problems linked to this phenomenon, my account differs in many respects from these assumptions.

Generally, gold mining communities are migrant communities. In the new social environment, immigrants build up new ties, among themselves and to the local societies and/or transfer social bonds into a new context. In both ways, from an actor’s point of view, friendship is one option to choose. It is a social process of referring to a known institution, giving them a new meaning, enhancing and adopting them to the situation in the mining camps, thus reducing complexity, creating a minimum degree of trust and hence the basis for everyday interaction and economic transactions.

In my paper, I will explore the general logics being the basis of friendship bonds in that area and discuss its integrative strength, as well as its limits. In the context of gold mining, it is above all logics of - economic as well as social - risk minimisation that incline many migrants to reinforce friendship bonds.

I will argue that it is mainly about sharing the yields: roughly speaking, among friends, parity in income sharing is more likely to be established than among kinsmen, “brothers”. This is more important the more flexible these arrangements are, in terms of time and the composition of the mining teams.

Friendship is not the only bond that people use to create cohesion and to seek mutual support in that context. But, according to my data, it is specifically relevant to integrate people of very different regional, ethnic and social backgrounds. Despite the many divergent interests between different economic actors, locals and
immigrants, there are multiple bonds which ease tensions and give raise to different levels of social integration and advance empowerment of all miners vis-à-vis the state authorities.

On the methodological level, I will distinguish between formal or informal local institutions, linked to emic perceptions of friendship and friendship as an analytical category to be defined by its content.

I will distinguish three types of friendship ties that are the most relevant in this context, but differ in their basic mode of constitution and their content. Secondly, I aim to present some emic categories and perspectives on friendship. Finally, I will raise some general methodological and theoretical issues on friendship and consider some debatable assumptions in the literature.

Sten Hagberg (Uppsala University)

The politics of joking relationships in Burkina Faso

The paper is about the joking relationships and how these are expressed socio-politically in three different contexts in present-day Burkina Faso. The first context is the joking relationship between blacksmiths (sing. numu, pl. numuw) and Fulbe (sing. pullo, pl. fulbe). I describe how in the many outbreaks of violence that have occurred in Western Burkina since the 1980s many Fulbe have come to seek refuge among their joking partners. In the blacksmiths’ homestead the Fulbe are safe. Yet blacksmiths play a double role, because they both protect their sinankunw (joking partners) against violence and act as traditional peacemakers, whose urge to stop violence ought to be respected by everyone.

The second context concerns national politics and how joking relationships are used politically. In particular, the paper describes how the satirical weekly “Journal du Jeudi” - run by Boubakar Diallo (a journalist of Fulbe origin) - has made insults against Fulbe’s joking partners, the Bobo, the journal's editorial line. The third context looks into the practice of joking relationships in the daily machinery of state administration. It focuses on how people use joking relationships to facilitate administrative treatment of a dossier or any other problem. In the discussion, the paper argues that the practice of joking relationships is a central feature of social life, but that it is rarely addressed in political and social theorising of contemporary African societies. While some people to advocate for the more or less instrumental use of joking relationships for conflict resolution and social peace, few analyses have sought to investigate the impact of this social institution.

The paper further argues that the institution of joking relationship cannot merely be understood as a curious remnant of the past, but must be theorised as an integral part of political and social life in Burkina Faso. Therefore, the paper finally suggests that joking relationships are as negotiated, manipulated and reinterpreted as any other of the main features of Burkinabe political culture.
Georg Klute (Free University Berlin/Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin)

From friends to enemies. Negotiating nationalism, tribal identities and kinship in the fratricidal War of the Malian Tuareg.

The Tuareg upheaval in Northern Mali aimed originally at the erection of an autonomous region or even a state that should unite all members of the “Tuareg-Nation” (temust). Former differences between regional and tribal groups, or between various classes of the hierarchical traditional society should disappear and make room for a common national identity. Despite its discourse of national unity, the rebel movement soon split up into several factions opposing one another first politically, and later also militarily. In an earlier publication I have shown, that the divisions between the various factions do not only reflect diverging political orientations, but that they also refer to friendly or hostile relationships between tribes or confederations of tribes. These relationships though are not very old; their present form goes back to the colonial conquest at the beginning of the 20th century (Klute 1995).

This paper deals also with the divisions of the rebel movement in Mali. It is not only based on observations or interviews, but also, and mainly, on biographical studies. I collected biographical data of 241 persons in the region of Kidal (in a population of then roughly 35,000 souls) with help of questionnaires that comprised a maximum of 39 entries each. The most influential men (and women) of the region were selected and questioned: tribal chiefs and tribal notables on the one hand, and on the other “intellectuals”, that is persons with High School degrees (or more). The data are organised in such a way that all entries can be linked. The organisation of the data allows to follow processes of relation-building of various kinds between different persons and political, tribal or descent groups from the very beginning of the organisation of the upheaval in the Libyan and Algerian exile to the end of the conflict. It will be shown, that particularly during the fratricidal war between the region’s two rebel movement in 1994, the descent logic prevailed over any other motive of relation-building, whereas at other times political orientations or personal relationships cut across tribal and kin solidarity.

Justus Ogembo (University of New Hampshire)

Friendship and kinship in the vicissitudes of daily life in Gusii

Friendship is here defined as an intersubjective emotional bond between individuals and groups which is formed - and can be terminated - at any time during the life-course. It is allied to but distinct from love. Although it is subject to social institutional
influences, it is capable of transcending and transforming the institutions and, *ipso facto,* the lives of the friends. And, although it can be - and often is - entered into for instrumental reasons, it can (and does) exist as an end in itself and for that reason capable of surviving the vicissitudes of social and personal life. For the agrarian Gusii of southwestern Kenya, friendship is to kinship what progressivism is to conservatism.

Since the advent of Christianity and colonialism in the society at the beginning of the 20th century through the forced participation in the two world wars and incorporation into the world economy, the conservative desire to cling to the dictates of kinship ties has been challenged by the progressive desire to obey the dictates of friendship. Either has influenced the other and thus transformed the character of the society.

**Michaela Pelican (MPI for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale)**

**Interethnic friendship in North West Cameroon: A comparison of ethnic and gender specific forms and concepts**

My presentation is based on material from my research on interethnic relations and identity politics in North West Cameroon. Interethnic friendship relationships play an important role here as cross-cutting ties supporting social cohesion and peaceful co-existence of the different ethnic groups.

In discussions with informants about the background, history and importance of interethnic friendship relations, the relevance of shared commonalities (e.g. economic relations, neighbourhood, shared experiences, and emotional ties) was stressed. Also it became clear that interpretations of the social function of friendship did not only differ between members of different ethnic groups, but also between men and women.

In my presentation I will look at institutionalized friendship relations as described in the literature and compare them with the contemporary praxis in North West Cameroon. Interethnic friendship relations will be situated within a wider context of social relations, starting from kinship and joking relations to solidarity networks and to more economically motivated relations like host-guest and patron-client relationships. Special attention will be paid to gender- and age- specific differences in the interpretation and assessment of institutionalized and individual friendship relationships.
Paul Spencer (School of Oriental and African Studies/SOAS, London)

The shift from descent to alliance among the Maasai

The Maasai of East Africa have a clear-cut age system, characteristic of other non-Islamic pastoral societies in the region. However, unlike most of their northern neighbours, this system is not complicated by generational constraints, and the Maasai are also atypical in the degree to which kinship bonds beyond the extended family are largely ignored: e.g. clanship is significant only by default. Thus Lévi-Strauss’s (1949) theory of alliance between exogamous groupings (= Tylor’s ‘marry out or die out’) is at first sight as irrelevant as it is outdated and inapplicable to Africa anyway. Clan exogamy among the Maasai is lax, and concepts of incest with relatively close ‘sisters’ are not a matter of general concern. However, the Maasai notion of incest with a classificatory ‘daughter’, and above all with the daughter of an age mate excites the sort of horror that Malinowski, for instance, associated with sibling incest. In this paper, I show how the intense bonds of friendship between age mates grow out of their experience as unmarried warriors (moran). The warrior village (manyata) is characterized by an excessive - even obsessive - ‘group indulgence’, opposed to any display of self-interest. This male age-bonding is expected to form the basis of friendship and social life for the rest of their lives. Giving is the essence of this bond, especially of consumables such as food and hospitality, and it would be dangerous to refuse the request of an age mate. However, they cannot beg the forbidden ‘daughters’ from one another, even though ties is a high polygynous society and the father above all has the power to bestow his daughters in marriage. Thus, oddly and unexpectedly, Lévi-Strauss’s theory of alliance becomes relevant to the ambivalent and often hostile relations between age-sets. Age-sets are obliged to be ‘exogamous’ by the avoidance and out-marriage of ‘daughters’, ensuring the marriage market for moran as they settle down and the continuity of Maasai society. In other words, marked rivalry amounting to hostility between age-sets does not and cannot extend to denying younger men marriage to ‘daughters’ (Matapato, Chapter 10).

The argument can be pursued somewhat speculatively in relation to Maasai history. Generally, the Maasai recognize that clan exogamy was more strictly observed in the past, and there are clues in the early literature, notably Merker’s Die Maasai (1904), that clanship had been more pronounced in earlier times. Moran bore clan markings on their shields, and debts and feuds were pursued with force between clans, apparently without restraint from the wider society. This would have been anathema in the C20, when hostility between clans would have undermined the unity among manyata moran of different clans. In fact, this evokes a society rather similar to the Samburu further north, where Maasai-type manyat were absent and clanship was strong: clan exogamy among the Samburu was strictly observed, and the prime loyalty among Moran was to age mates of their clan, rather than to age mates at
large. According to Maasai oral tradition, the C19 was a period when two charismatic Prophets, Supeet and Mbatian, had a dominant influence and they were largely responsible to unifying Maasai moran against powerful enemies. This suggests that the policy of unification sought to build up altruism and group indulgence as a manyata virtue that overrode family feuds and clan hostilities in the interests of Maasai dominance throughout the region.

Tal Tamari (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique/CNRS, Paris)

Joking relationships in West Africa: A political and sociological analysis

This paper will focus on interethnic and interclan joking relationships, which should be distinguished from those that obtain among various categories of relatives by descent or marriage (such as grandparent/grandchild, cross cousins, sister-in-law/junior brother-in-law). Among the Manding-speaking peoples, each clan is linked to at least one, but usually several, other clans by such a relationship; some relationships apply throughout the Manding-speaking world, while others are locally specific. Joking relationships also link the Dogon people to the Bozo people and the Fulani people to the blacksmiths. While their psychological value can still be observed today, it should be realized that, through the early twentieth century, they were also a minor means of regulating the political relationships of groups that did not recognize any common ancestry. Members of linked groups had to avoid injuring each other (even when they found themselves on opposite sides in battle), and were required to provide each other with material assistance and redeem each other from slavery, should the need arise. According to several versions of the Sunjata epic, joking relationships were the instrument by which a number of autonomous, clan-based chiefdoms confederated to establish the Mali empire. Joking relationships often involve ceremonial blood exchanges, which have been documented as a means of establishing political and military treaties and distributing land and water rights, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Interclan and interethnic joking relationships were often accompanied by a prohibition on intermarriage and, at least in the case of the Manding, appear to be rooted in the concepts of traditional religion, particularly “totemism” (the belief that the founder of a given clan was succoured by a member of a particular animal or plant species, which consequently should not be consumed).
Steve Tonah (Sociology Department, University of Ghana, Legon)

“Some of the Mamprusi are also our friends”: Interethnic relations and the articulation of friendship between the pastoral Fulbe and the Mamprusi in Northern Ghana.

The Fulbe are mainly pastoralists who have settled amongst the indigenous Mamprusi population of northern Ghana since the beginning of the 20th Century. While some Fulbe households have been living with the Mamprusi for 2-3 generations, others are recent migrants from Northern Ghana and neighbouring Burkina Faso. Almost all of the Fulbe work as hired herders, keeping in addition to their own cattle, those of their Mamprusi host. All Fulbe households have been entrusted with cattle by particular Mamprusi households, some of them for two or more generations. The nature of the relationship that has developed between the Fulbe and their Mamprusi host varies considerably. Considerable attention has, in the past, been given to disputes and conflicts that characterized the relationship between the Fulbe and their neighbours, and little attention was given to cooperation and consensus. The relationship between newly-arrived Fulbe households and their Mamprusi hosts can generally be characterized as being of a patron-client nature. However, as Fulbe households establish themselves and expand their social and economic network within the community, the relationship with their hosts increasingly become more of (economic) partnership and cooperation rather than unilateral dependence on their hosts. Many of these interethnic relationships do develop beyond economics exchanges into (good) neighbourly relations and friendship ties. Furthermore, other Fulbe households have developed social relations with Mamprusi with whom they do not have any economic links.

This paper examines interethnic relations between the Fulbe and the Mamprusi in Northern Ghana. It analyses how relationships between households from the two communities are established and sometimes transformed from the initial master-servant, patron-client, business partnership to close friendship ties. The importance of economic exchanges in the development of friendship between the Fulbe and the Mamprusi is stressed but it is by means a condition for the development of interethnic friendship relations.

Reciprocal economic exchanges (based on cattle) appear to be significant for the development of friendship relationship amongst adult males. Fulbe women and children develop friendship relations with the Mamprusi in other ways. The paper would look at how social relations and friendship are established between Fulbe and Mamprusi women and adolescents. Women develop social ties mainly through participation in market exchanges while schooling, entertainment and other social activities bring the youth from the two communities much closer than their parents. Interethnic friendship ties developed by individual household members are always strained (and perhaps fortified) by conflicts that occur at various levels.
Finally, the paper would examine the unique role of Islam and Islamic institutions in the development and strengthening of friendship ties between the Fulbe and the Mamprusi.

Richard L. Warms (Southwest Texas State University)

Friendship behaviors of merchants and veterans in Southwestern Mali

This paper, based on fieldwork in Southwestern Mali in the 1980s and 1990s analyzes the difference between friendship behaviors of merchants and those of veterans of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais. It suggests that merchants form friendship relations with other merchants and veterans with other veterans for different reasons: while both merchants and veterans friendship relations have economic concomitants, these are instrumental for merchants but secondary for veterans. In the pre-modern era, trade in West Africa was an ethnic monopoly. Ethnic Hausa and Dioula traders transported valuables such as gold, salt, and live animals between desert, Sahel, and forest ecosystems. The bonds of trust necessary to commerce were facilitated by common ethnic group membership and family ties. In Mali, after French colonization in the late 19th century, these ethnic trading systems were destroyed both by systematic policy decisions taken against them and by lower entry barriers to marketing. Fieldwork in Sikasso, a town of 40,000 in Southwestern Mali shows that there, the destruction of ethnic trade led to the development of a cross-ethnic network built largely on bonds of confidence and friendship. To develop the level of trust necessary to business arrangements, merchants forge friendships, particularly with younger traders. In many cases, these are converted to family ties as the young traders often marry the daughters of their older mentors.

Friendship among merchants in Sikasso works very differently than friendship among war veterans in Bougouni, a town of 20,000 people about 100 miles north of Sikasso. Interviews among this group show that pensioned veterans who were capable of achieving positions of power in their families in rural villages generally stayed in these locations, as did those who came from such villages and had no pensions at all. While these individuals were likely to count other veterans among their friends. I do not believe that this friendship played an unusually important role among their social relations. Individuals who received pensions but who were in structurally weak position in their families generally moved from villages to the town of Bougouni. There, for many, friendships with other veterans and the social that centered around the veterans’ association formed a critical link in their social lives. However, I found few connections among these families. Veterans tend to marry into each others’ families far less frequently than merchants.
Werbner, Richard (University of Manchester)

"Down-to-Earth": Friendship and a national elite circle in Botswana.

The paper will explore friendship relations in connection to political networks in Botswana. The paper is based on recent fieldwork and explores the establishment of national elites across generations.

Wolde, Tadesse (MPI for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale)

Are kin friends? Or are friends alternative kin? Friends and kin in three East African communities.

The boundary that separates kin and friends in some East-African communities is difficult to draw. Cases taken from various groups in the region indicate an overlap in the definition and understanding of friends and kin. While overlap of definition and understanding of these concepts is visible in areas involving life marking rituals, in matters of inheritance and in the practices of revenge killing (in vengeance of a murdered friend in some groups), distinction is often marked in areas where exchange and entrusting of property is involved.