Zusammenstellung:
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Familie und Verwandtschaft von der Spätantike bis zur Frühen Neuzeit

Kurseinheit 3:
Debatten der Forschung 1

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I. Die Goody-Debatte

1. Lynch: Kritik der Intentionalität der Kirche

Joseph H. Lynch, Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1986, 260-261.

Goody sees the church's negative attitude toward a whole series of family matters – including concubinage, adoption, divorce, and marriages with close kin – as intended to deny many families such easy ways to find legal heirs, particularly male heirs. The net result of the marriage regulations was to increase the chances that some of an heirless family's property would be given to the church as a pious donation.[1] His conclusion was that:

> for the Church to grow and survive it had to accumulate property, which meant acquiring control over the way it was passed from one generation to the next. Since the distribution of property between generations is related to patterns of marriage and the legitimisation of children, the Church had to gain authority over these so that it could influence the strategies of heirship.[2]

Such explanations are interesting and illuminating, but the assessment of their validity must wait for more research. It is one thing to describe what happened as a result of the increasing complexity of marriage law, but it is quite another to demonstrate that the church *intended* such results or even understood the cause and effect relationship that apparently increased its power and wealth. In any case, without denying the multiplicity of causes and results, I shall look elsewhere to account for the growth of a specific set of marital taboos, those between spiritual kin.

An explanation for these sexual taboos that stresses ecclesiastical or secular legislation would, however, also be inadequate, for in the rudimentary state of premodern governments mere legislative command could not create *ex nihilo* a strong sentiment about incest. But if such a sentiment existed already, the law could channel it, reinforce it, diffuse it to new groups or areas, fix its contours, and settle disputes about its limits. The early medieval written law on the matter was basically a reaction rather than a cause. In other words, anxiety about sexual contact among spiritual kin arose in a particular time and place, among the Christian peoples of the Mediterranean in the sixth and seventh centuries. This anxiety was influenced by biblical injunctions, legislators' strictures, and perhaps the political and material interests of the church, but it was not created by them.

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[1] Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 59, 95, 103–156.
[2] Ibid., p. 221.

The roots of the sexual taboos that came to be an integral element of spiritual kinship must be sought in two other areas: first, in late ancient and early medieval attitudes toward sexuality, and second, in the contrast that Christians perceived between carnal and spiritual birth, between the realms of the flesh and the spirit. The incest taboo makes cultural sense when it is seen as flowing out of the confrontation between a pessimistic view of sexual activity and a conviction that baptism created a spiritual family, which had to be kept free from the taint inherent in sexuality.

The great Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have been marked by a vigorous effort to direct the sexual behavior of their adherents, primarily by limiting such activities. As a consequence of its allegiance to the Old Testament and to the ethics of normative Judaism, early Christianity condemned with little hesitation a wide range of sexual activities, including homosexuality, bestiality, fornication, adultery, and incest. These prohibitions were probably reinforced by trends in the culture of late antiquity. In the course of the third century, Catholic Christianity entered more and more into contact with the main currents of Greco-Roman life. And one of the strongest of these currents, at least among the educated classes to whose opinions we have access, was a growing "spiritualization" of thought and values, a stress on spirit to the disadvantage of matter, a sharpening of the dualism inherent in much of Greek thought, and an almost boundless admiration for ascetics who denied the body: in short, a flight from the world of sense and matter to a realm where men would be angels.