Sharon Kettering, *Patronage in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France.* Aldershot, U.K. and Burlington, Ver.: Ashgate, 2002. vi + 286 pp. $105.95. ISBN 0-86078-881-4.

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Sharon Kettering is the queen of early modern patronage studies, and this welcome re-publication of eleven essays on the subject, all written in the decade following her ground-breaking synthesis *Patrons, Brokers and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France,* allows us to pay homage to her research, to evaluate where the historiography currently stands, and to see what issues require further exploration. Unlike many of the *Varorium* reprints, the eleven articles reproduced here have a strong intellectual and thematic coherence. The first section contains four essays dealing with the historiography, language, and function of patronage and clientage; section two consists of two studies outlining the role of female patronage; the third section has two studies detailing the development of brokerage; and the final section has three case studies that constitute a narrative of the changing structure of clientage from the Wars of Religion to the reign of Louis XIV (see list of essays below).

In the 1980s and early 1990s historians of early modern political culture were working in relatively uncharted territory, and their debates revolved around the identification of conceptual problems as they groped for a common language to describe and interpret the phenomena they were studying. Much of Kettering's work has been concerned with the function of noble relationships and defining the terms we ought to use in interpreting them in clear, accessible prose. An opportunity is rarely missed in these essays to reiterate what she understands by the terms patron, broker, and client. She gives fair consideration to other possible categories for describing noble relationships such as *fidelité* and "affinity" before dismissing the former as too idealistic and the latter as too imprecise.

Kettering gives particularly short shrift to Kristen Neuschel's ideas, derived from socio-linguistic theory, which question the existence of clientage altogether, arguing that contemporary psychology and behaviour made such relationships impossible.[1] Neuschel is, perhaps rather unusually, grouped together with Roland Mousnier for favouring the affective nature of relationships over the material. Kettering is a materialist with an firm belief that models initially developed by sociologists and political scientists continue to be a valuable tools for the historian, providing a language and a method that permit comparison across centuries and across disciplines, organize the empirical data, and enable us to test the veracity of the evidence with precision.[2] She has retained an admirable consistency in her view that the relationship between a patron and client is essentially a material bond, but one that did not preclude affective relationships: "Loyalty was one of several determining characteristics of noble patron-client relationships in early modern France. These relationships were personal and emotional, and they were voluntary vertical alliances between two persons who were unequal in status: there was a superior, a patron, and an inferior who was his dependant, a client. The patron-client bond was a reciprocal exchange relationship in which patrons provided material benefits, and clients provided loyalty in return."[3]

As the influence of Roland Mousnier and his students, who championed the idea of *fidelité*, has receded and as the intellectual tide of the linguistic turn has ebbed, so Kettering's interpretation has emerged as the dominant interpretation. This is confirmed by her growing influence among French scholars. It is significant that the best recent work on seventeenth-century patronage comes from a French historian who has analysed the material and financial underpinnings of patronage through painstaking archival research.[4]

But Kettering is too good a historian to be labelled a reductionist. One of her concerns has been to chart the semantic shifts in the language of patronage. Her approach is firmly empirical and philological rather than hermeneutic. In her essay on "Friendship and Clientage," she recognises the multiple meanings of *ami* and *amitié* and the interchangeable and overlapping categories of friends, clients, and kin, and she unpicks the various meanings of the word *crédit* in an essay on the role of brokerage at the court of Louis XIV. The changes wrought by the seventeenth century are a major theme of this collection, as royal patronage rapidly outstripped the resources at the disposal of the *grands*. In the same essay on brokerage she provides a concise and fascinating insight into how the levers of patronage operated at Versailles.

Kettering posits a number of reasons for the decline of great noble clientage at the end of the seventeenth century: the growing expense of maintaining a great household; the fading of local ties as magnates moved to court; the growing noble disdain for household service; the monopoly of military patronage by the crown; the rise of venality; and the spread of ministerial clienteles. Clientage continued to be an important factor structuring politics in the eighteenth century, but members of the aristocracy were increasingly brokers of royal office rather than independent patrons. Finally, this volume contains two seminal essays on the patronage power of early modern French noblewomen which highlight the important role played by women in the informal networks that underpinned political action.

All further debate on the subject will take Kettering's work as its starting point. Where do we go from here? Clearly, we require much more empirical work on specific followings and how their composition changed over time. This is not an easy undertaking for Ph.D. students because the recreation of a clientele from documentary sources is a painstaking and difficult task and, though fundamentally important to our understanding of political society, is often viewed with condescension by the Academy as dry as dust archive grubbing. Prosopography is not something that is likely to excite interviewers for academic posts. Some concession to historical fashion is therefore inevitable, but if fresh life is breathed into old problems, then this is no bad thing.

Our first task should be to close the debate about terminology that characterised the 1980s and 1990s and reach a consensus that will enable medieval, renaissance and eighteenth-century specialists to open up a more fruitful dialogue in order to explore how the categories they employ changed over time. We might accept Mark Greengrass's suggestion that clientage worked differently depending on what you wanted from it and recognise it as a set of multiplex relationships.[5] The only problem with this approach is that it is likely to tell us little about change. And I think that we should be clear about what these words mean: "client" describes a different relationship to a lord or patron than does "counsellor," "lackey" or "retainer;" it is not synonymous with these.

There has been, as yet, no *longue durée* approach to the problem of clientage. Kettering's work has a longer chronological span than most, but her belief that clientage develops from feudalism is the aspect of her work I find most unconvincing. Medieval historians cannot agree what feudalism was or whether or not it existed at all.[6] We now know more about the development of the royal clientele in the fifteenth century thanks to the work of Gareth Prosser, though our knowledge of individual magnate followings is woefully inadequate.[7]

Kettering's identification of a long-term shift from military patronage to brokerage of royal office is in outline substantially correct, but further research may stresses continuity as well as change. The creation of the gendarmerie in the fifteenth century gave the monarchy enormous powers of patronage, and the work of David Parrott and his students is showing how expansion of the royal army in the seventeenth century was built with rather than in opposition to aristocratic patronage.[8]

For the sixteenth century Neuschel did great service in reminding us that magnates were patrons but above all were warriors, whose followings primarily consisted of noble men-at-arms. Endemic violence in the period 1559-1660 ensured that a following retained its protective functions and operated in much the same way as the early medieval war band.[9] Neuschel found that her sixteenth-century noblemen did not act like clients. Her iconoclastic approach was fresh and stimulating, but the conclusion she drew--that clientage is an arbitrary historical category--has not found wide acceptance and was subject to a searching critique by Kettering.

I would add that the answer to why the prince de Condé's followers failed to behave like clients, as classically defined, is more straightforward than the psychological model proposed by Neuschel: her subjects did not act like clients because they were *not* clients in the modern social science definition; they were friends, kinsmen, and allies of Condé whose relationship was one of equality in which the prince was *primus inter pares*. Liveried retainers were in a subordinate position, but as noblemen they claimed an autonomy of action that was not expected of men working in the lower levels of the royal administration. Kinship and the shared hardship in the field, where prowess preceded lineage, created horizontal bonds of homosociality and reciprocity that do not easily fit the clientage model of structuring social relations. The ground for a re-examination of Condé's following has recently been cleared by David Potter.[10] I propose that we begin with an analysis of his drinking buddies and those with whom he breakfasted in bed, rather than which *élu* rigged his tenantry's tax assessment.

I have argued elsewhere that the fluid "sea of relationships" that constituted aristocratic followings in the sixteenth-century is much better described by the term first developed by late-medievalists, namely "affinity." Great lords did have clients, *in strict sensu*, in the royal fiscal, judicial, and military machinery and in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but these men constituted only a part of their following. Likewise, clients and kinsmen formed only the core of parties and factions mobilised behind ideological issues, namely the reformation of the polity in its numerous guises (Burgundianism, the *Bien Publique*, the Catholic League, the Frondes) and religion.

Kettering has shown how the clientage system changed in the seventeenth-century, becoming more impersonal and more associated with venal office-holding. She reminds us of the famous event when the duc de La Rochefoucauld turned up at the siege of La Rochelle in 1628 with 1500 Poitevin nobles, informing the king "Sire, there is not one who is not a relative."[11] But this was a statement of fact and not a boast. Like many non-princely elevations to the peerage from the provincial elite the La Rochefoucauld depended heavily on horizontal alliances, such as those families in sixteenth-century Champagne who formed clans based on ties of cousinship which allowed them to operate independent of magnate influence.[12]

Richelieu's clientele was substantially different, and his relationship to his subordinates relied more on subservience and material reward. How many of his clients did he know by their face, could he name their wives and children? Some may argue that La Rochefoucauld's statement represents something "feudal" that was already out of its time and that Richelieu's clientele is representative of "modernity." But we should always be wary of the teleology of the state that lies behind such statements.

In an age when everyone was the king's good servant the idea that aristocrats were opposed to the growth of royal power is a fallacy. The independence of magnates from the crown before the seventeenth century is overestimated; the independence of the gentry vis-à-vis magnates, at least in rich

and populous provinces like Picardy and Normandy, underestimated. If the military followings of the Frondeur princes foundered because of a lack of money, this was no less true of aristocratic ventures in the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries. Already by the fifteenth century the idea of monarchy and the symbols of its power shaped the legitimate boundaries of political action. Already by the fifteenth century royal patronage exuded so much magnetic energy that its attraction was massive and inexorable when the king was competent. Of course, kings were not always competent and very occasionally, like Charles VI, they were mad.

Foreign intervention in France enabled magnates great freedom of manoeuvre, but when the English were distracted by their own civil wars, Louis XI, from a weak position, was able to overcome (just) the united opposition of the major princely houses. Social peace and dynastic stability at the end of the fifteenth and in the first half of the sixteenth century made France look as if it was taking the English route with a greatly expanded royal clientage base in the localities operating peaceably alongside aristocratic brokers in the service of the crown, before civil war and foreign intervention once again created an imbalance in local power structures. The atrophy of royal power during the Wars of Religion did not of course mean greater aristocratic power; it led to instability, bankruptcy, and chaos.

It was not until the reign of Louis XIV that a king who ruled with the full confidence of his magnates was able fully to restore royal and, therefore, aristocratic hegemony. By then clienteles had, as Kettering shows with a wealth of detail, changed in character. But so too had the nobility. It was no less warlike, but it increasingly saw valour as a virtue gained in service of the sovereign and the regiment, as well as the lineage. As wealth, social differentiation, and education made political society larger and more complex, competition for recognition and for royal patronage only increased. Merit on the field of battle, in the arts, or in administration could only take the young man so far. Advancement required above all kinship contacts, go-betweens, and patrons.

Did this make clients less autonomous in the eighteenth century than they had been before? Perhaps, but this is a question that only eighteenth century specialists can fully answer.[13] All I can offer by way of response is the unrepresentative example of Rousseau's *Confessions*, which shows that the relationship between master and servant, patron and client did not always follow the trajectory that social science models predict. Human relationships are infinitely complex. This makes them particularly suited to interpretation by the historical imagination, in which social science models, as Sharon Kettering shows us, are useful tools for understanding rather than strict interpretative templates.

LIST OF ESSAYS

- Patronage in Early Modern France.
- Gift-Giving in Early Modern France.
- Patronage and Kinship in Early Modern France.
- Friendship and Clientage in Early Modern France.
- The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen.
- The Household Service of Early Modern French Noblewomen.
- The Historical Development of Political Clientelism.
- Brokerage at the Court of Louis XIV.
- Clientage during the French Wars of Religion.
- Patronage and Politics during the Fronde.
- The Decline of Great Noble Clientage during the Reign of Louis XIV.

NOTES

[1] Kristen Neuschel, *Word of Honor: Interpreting Noble Culture in Sixteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[2] "The Clientelism during the Wars of Religion."

[3] "Clientage during the Wars of Religion," p. 223.

[4] Katia Béguin, *Les princes de Condé: rebelles, courtisans et mécènes dans la France du Grand Siècle* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 1999).

[5] Mark Greengrass, "Functions and Limits of Political Clientelism in France before Cardinal Richelieu," *L'état ou le roi: les fondations de la modernité monarchique en France (XIVe-XVIIe siècles)*, eds. Neithard Bulst, Robert Descimon, and Alain Guerreau (Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 1996), p. 73.

[6] Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: the Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[7] Gareth Prosser, "After the Reduction: Re-Structuring Norman Political Society and the Bien Public, 1450-1465," Unpublished PhD thesis (University of London, 1996), requires publication. Until then see: *idem*, "Decayed Feudalism and Royal Clienteles: Royal Office and Magnate Service in the Fifteenth Century," in *War, Government and Power in Late Medieval France*, ed. Christopher Allmand (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

[8] D. Parrott, *Richelieu's Army: War, Government, and Society in France, 1624-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and G. Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661 to 1701* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[9] On violence see: Stuart Carroll, "The Peace in Feud in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century France," *Past and Present* (2003), forthcoming.

[10] David Potter, "The French Protestant Nobility in 1562: The Association de Monseigneur le Prince de Condé," *French History* 15 (2001): 307-28.

[11] "Patronage and Kinship in Early Modern France," p. 411.

[12] Laurent Bourquin, *Noblesse seconde et pouvoir en Champagne aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994), p. 99.

[13] A good place to start would be Peter Campbell, *Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 1720-1745* (London: Routledge, 1996).

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