**The social network in Byzantium and its neighbors**

**Colloquiarchs: Margaret Mullett and Adam Schor**

**16-17 March 2012**

This, the last of three related colloquia picks up from studies of friendship and other personal relations in March 2010 and the self in 2011 to look at communications and social networks in Byzantium as seen in a wider Mediterranean perspective. Recent attempts to apply network theory to interactive texts in the premodern world have had varying results, and we shall look beyond Byzantium to the ancient world, the medieval west and the Islamic world.

Talk of social networks may seem bound to this era of instant messages and Facebook revolutions. But pre-modern worlds were just as dependent on personal interaction, conducted through various cultural categories and modes of communication. For generations scholars have studied the friendships and patronage ties of classical Greece and Rome, the personal loyalties of medieval western Christendom, the threads of mentorship among early rabbis and early Islamic sages, the role of *fama* in consolidating (or disintegrating) communities*.* In each case, they have found amorphous webs of attachment, shaping community life more deeply than formal institutions. Byzantine society featured distinct patterns of relations, between civil and military elites, clergy and laity, landlords and peasants, merchants and bureaucrats. Equally Byzantium owed its distinction to links outside the empire, and the centrality of its members in wider Mediterranean relations.

Since the 1960s sociologists have developed methods to map and measure modern social attachment, and to conceptualize the interplay between social interactions and individual and communal identity. Historians have variously adapted these methods and concepts to study Byzantium and other Mediterranean societies. But how should we understand the workings of pre-modern social networks, given the vast differences in technology and culture? How can we perceive these networks through our limited sources? How might we discern the way pre-modern social interactions employed cultural constructs and in turn shaped selves and communities?

This colloquium will explore social connectedness in Byzantium and other related communities. Building on the recent Dumbarton Oaks colloquia about friendship and the self, this gathering will focus on the use of network analysis and network concepts with a range of evidence (from collected sayings to documentary papyri) over the whole Byzantine period (from classical to late medieval and beyond). Special emphasis will be placed on probing various methodologies for use in pre-modern studies and comparing the social and cultural patterns of Byzantium with those of its predecessors and neighbors.

**Thursday**

8.00 Supper at 3026 ½ R St NW

**Friday**

12.30 Lunch in the Refectory

2.00 Private session with Hans Noel (Political Science, Georgetown) in the Byzantine Offices. Network analysis workshop: he will present for 30 minutes on some network analysis concepts, methods and tools. There will be time for questions. Then there will be brief formal comment from one or two historians (or literary scholars) about applicability to our concerns, followed by free discussion on the larger issue of applicability of net analysis to pre-modern history.

4.00: Tea in the Study

4.30 Welcomes: Jan Ziolkowski, Margaret Mullett

4.45 Adam Schor, Introduction

5.00 Shawn Graham (Carleton U, Ottawa), *Networks, Data Mining, and Archaeology:* C*omputational approaches to networks of power and influence at Rome and Constantinople,* on electric archaeology, social patterns and political influence in the Roman world

5.30 Adam Schor (South Carolina), *Assembling the Late Roman Clergy: Epistolary Networks and their Narrative Representations* on clerical networks as viewed via letter-collections as against narrative: case studies will be third-century North Africa and fourth- to fifth-century Syria

6.00 Discussion

7.00 for 7.30 Dinner in the Refectory (speakers, fellows, staff)

**Saturday**

8.30 Coffee in the Study

9.00 Giovanni Ruffini (Fairfield, Connecticut), *Byzantine Aphrodito: Hierarchies and Network Analysis,* on the use of quantitative network analysis on late antique papyri to map affiliation networks among different ranks of Roman officials and honorary social elites

9.30 Catherine Hezser (SOAS), *Crossing Enemy Lines: Network Connections between Palestinian and Babylonian Rabbis in Late Antiquity,*on the capacity (or lack thereof) of rabbinic literature to reconstruct real rabbinic social networks

10.00 Discussion

10.30 Coffee in the Study

11.00 Helmut Reimitz (Princeton), *Spielräume for Visions of Community: Identifications* *and Identities of Social Networks in the Merovingian Kingdoms*, on the formation of ethnic identity in early medieval Francia, based on the mapping of the use of ethnic identifiers in authors and manuscript traditions

11.30 Michael Bonner (Michigan) on the usefulness of network concepts to describe the society of the Syrian Frontier zone under the Umayyad and early Abbasid caliphs

12.00 Discussion

12.30 Lunch

2.00 Margaret Mullett, *Saint, Scholar, Metropolitan, Monk,* on various kinds of network, and various kinds of evidence, in eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantium

2.30 Walter Ysebaert (Brussels), *Mapping Medieval Writers: a Case Study and some*

*Methodological Questions,* on twelfth-century networks in France: a combination of medieval studies, content analysis and network analysis

3.00 Discussion

3.30 Tea

4.00 Niels Gaul (CEU, Budapest), *Learned Networks and Networking Strategies in Byzantium* on self-representation among late Byzantine scholars via manuscript studies and letter collections

4.30 Paul McLean (Rutgers), *Sociological Approaches to the Study of Historical*

*Networks: Renaissance Florence,* on the use of quantitative textual analysis and quantitative network analysis on elite patronage networks and merchant networks in renaissance Florence

5.00 Discussion

5.30 Margaret Mullett, Conclusion and final discussion

6.00 Prosecco in the Byzantine Courtyard

7.00 Private session in the Oaks

8.00 Dinner at Divan