

Desai, Amit and Evan Killick (eds.). 2010. *The Ways of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books. 228 pp. Hb.: \$60.00 / £35.00. ISBN: 9781845457310.

As a largely non-institutionalised form of social relationship, friendship has been neglected in anthropological studies, having customarily been relegated to a residual status, purified out of existence or subsumed under categories considered to yield more analytical power. This volume positions itself against current trends in anthropological analysis that encompass notions of friendship and kinship in larger terms, such as ‘relatedness’, as these may kill indigenous distinctions of social relationships, and advocates more nuanced understandings of the place and forms of friendship. This positioning naturally expands and challenges Maussian literature on personhood as well as dealing with kinship studies, but neglects to unpack ‘sentiment’ through, for instance, a closer appreciation of anthropological literature on emotions and affect. I will foreground several things that a focus on friendship affords in terms of an analysis of affective relationships between people.

One common thread through the ethnography is visibility. The non-institutionalised nature of friendship does not mean it is less important to people than public displays of relatedness. Gonçalo Santos’s contribution does not start from the ideology of fictive or ritual kinship underlying same-year siblingship in rural South China, but looks at what leads to this strategic deployment in practice. Santos identifies the latter as an important mode of homosocial friendship in which people’s practical and affective sense of mutual compatibility is so strong that the two non-kin related persons in question may feel what he calls an ‘affinal double’.

A focus on friendship gives cues about the ways in which people regard the shifting boundaries of their own community and how to treat outsiders. Evan Killick’s chapter on the relationships between *mestizos* and Ashéninka people in the Peruvian Amazon shows that, through the ideology of *compadrazgo*, the *mestizos* retain the idea of a hierarchical separation from their indigenous friends, while this hierarchical notion is absent in characterisations by Ashéninka of the same relationships. Changing notions of friendship mirror rapid environmental social change. Michelle Obeid’s piece on a Lebanese town on the Syrian border concentrates on the way in which the development of new neighbourhoods, the promulgation of political party and NGO activism as well as increased access to education has precipitated changes not just in livelihoods, but also the model of family and kinship to be strived for. In older herding systems of production, neighbours and kin often coincided, but with the upheavals of modernisation and war, sometimes more affinities would be felt between comrades in a political party than between, say, brothers.

Friendship affords a fresh perspective on the importance (or not) of proximity to shape social relations, and its differing capacity to create safe spaces. Rodgers’s chapter on Mozambican refugees to South Africa in the aftermath of the civil war argues that while kinship and friendship were intersecting social forms, the unpredictable life of refugees brought about dilemmas over betrayal, anxieties over abandonment and longing for familiar patterns of interaction, where friendship demonstrated both the resilience of kinship and its waning value in a context of rapid social change. Graeme Rodgers’s method of cross-border

video messaging is a fruitful way of overcoming the spatial distance and making visible the enduring nature of certain social ties across borders. His piece also strongly suggests that any theoretical distinction between kinship and friendship is rather difficult to sustain in practice, and that people will resourcefully use the social relations at their disposal.

Peggy Froerer's contribution is on peer relations in Central India, where the kinship-friendship binary is complicated by caste. She shows how proximity serves as the principal facilitator for social interaction, given that the co-habitation in *paras* (section of village) promotes engagement in shared activities. In fact, her argument shows how friendship ties can supersede caste, and kinship ties and obligations within *paras*, but also create social distrust among *paras*. The other Indian contribution by Amit Desai considers ritual friendship in contrast to ideologies of caste and personhood and also brings out why love or affection occupy such a central place in the imagination. His chapter similarly elucidates that friendship can create safety in a social world that otherwise is subject to spiritual attack or spectacular dispute.

Focusing on friendship can reveal and dismantle the Western stereotype model of friendship showing both diversity within the 'West' and beyond. Gillian Evans's phenomenological piece on the construction of friendship as social learning among children of a South London working-class area explodes the purported dichotomy between societies characterised by situated persons and those typified by autonomous individuals. In Magnus Course's piece, the Mapuche notion of friendship is shown to be based on individual autonomy, voluntarism, affection and a rejection of the constraining aspects of kinship. Course argues that this notion can be described in ways that echo descriptions of Western middle-class friendships, and engages Mauss's idea that the notion of the person as individual was a specific product of a singularly Western historical trajectory. Course's characterisation of the Mapuche person as 'centrifugal' fits into larger discussions on Amerindian personhood, which is often characterised as having to be constantly constructed, demonstrated, and attributed in practice. In other words, to be a true person is a demonstrable quality rather than a permanent state.

The central question that this volume analyses, through eight ethnographic engagements and one synthesising afterword by Simon Coleman, on friendship as a key form of human relatedness is as follows: is friendship a relationship characterised by autonomy, sentiment, individualism, lack of ritual and lack of instrumentality, or are these requirements peculiarly Western expressions of friendship imposed on other places and times? The editors' introduction positions the volume as aiming to study the spaces, histories and ideologies that allow and shape the constitution of friendship as a particular type of relationship. This makes it an ideal playground for undergraduate teaching on sociality, personhood and relatedness, but also opens up broader discussions on the discipline's evolution beyond structuralism, bias on the institutional, and the friendship ties that bind anthropologists and the people they study with.

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