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Communities

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ABSTRACT

Historians and social scientists have offered many and varied definitions of the term “community”. This chapter focuses on specific examples of face-to-face or local communities in order to test the possibilities and limits of the two major analytical approaches to communities: an anthropological approach which identifies ‘community’ as an organic entity, and a symbolic one which considers feelings of belonging and self-identification as constitutive aspects of a community. In this quest, close attention is paid to the question of the stabilization of community’s structures through legislation and institutions, a process that integrates such micro-societies into broader networks of power, and renders them visible to historians. In the first section we examine what we have called a “world of communities”, from periods when communities constituted the dominant element of social structure. Examining ancient Jewish and medieval Icelandic communities, and then early modern Irish and Scottish clans, we try to identify their basic characteristics and to reconstruct the way they related to the rest of the social structure. The second section analyzes the emergence of new loyalties and models of social membership from the 19th century onwards, emphasizing how the discourse on communities played a crucial role in the construction of these diverse patterns of identification and differentiation. Finally, we explore the permanence of the communitarian world supposedly replaced by nationalism and other major modern ideologies along with the new meanings and uses of communities in the 20th and 21st centuries. In sum, this broad overview provides a preliminary narrative of the changes in the structures of communities and their shifting position within wider patterns of social organizations while drawing attention to parallel transformations in theoretical reflection on communities.

It would probably be of little use to open this chapter with an OED definition of ‘community’. This word has not only been assigned different meanings throughout history; it has also been subjected to a variety of definitions by historians and other social scientists. So

much so that it may be considered one of the terms – together with *identity* – which has received the greatest amount of historiographical attention during the past two decades.

We devoted a previous volume in this series to an investigation into the role of communities in European history. In it we engaged in “a quest for definition” of the term community, underlining its “multiple meanings” and its “elusive” character¹. On that occasion we identified a fundamental tension between anthropological and symbolic approaches to communities. The anthropological approach conceives community as an empirical, living organism, defined by its “common interests”, “common ecology and locality”, and “common social system or structure”². Although not necessarily rejecting all of this, the symbolic approach focuses on the notion of “perceived borders”, and conceptualizes communities as “worlds of meaning in the minds of their bearers”³. The former approach stresses the importance of kinship, shared habitat, and local relationships. This view can be related to the pioneering work of the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, which differentiated between ‘community’ (organic in nature) and ‘association’ (a collection of individuals). The symbolic approach, exemplified by the studies of Anthony Cohen, holds that communities exist “only in relation with and opposition to other perceived communities”⁴. Benedict Anderson’s concept of imagined communities further develops this relational definition, and suggests that community can be a major social force even if its members are merely supposing (imagining) their belonging to a construct that is neither local nor visible.

In this chapter we focus on face-to-face or local communities in European history. Obviously, this does not mean that we dismiss other perspectives. Rather, we wish to investigate the basic characteristics that describe so-called organic communities, while testing the performance and limits of the dichotomy model. A number of what we could call ‘basic characteristics of communities’ will be identified here, but with a constant focus on the dynamic aspect of these foundational elements. Throughout time, community has been an ever-changing reality. Its propensity to change has been particularly visible in the context of internal conflict. Moreover, communities are invariably integrated into wider power structures. It is difficult to identify a community which has managed to preserve its complete autonomy from established power structures. It is therefore crucial to investigate the patterns of negotiation or interaction between communities and other levels of social organization, such as the family and the state.

It is precisely the stabilization of its structures and the creation of procedures of definition and regulation that makes community visible to historians. Communities will thus be studied in this chapter with special attention to their institutional or legal crystallization. The sources guide us in part toward this kind of focus, but we believe that it also reflects an inherent characteristic of communities. Although one fundamental constituent of community is located in its subjective dimension – by definition a community rests on the self-perception of its members – its visibility is for the most part determined by its regulation or institutionalization⁵. In fact, it is somewhat paradoxical that the few traces left by those subjective ties have, for the most part, to be studied as we recover

the institutionalized face of the communities under scrutiny. Although a relatively wide range of cases will be considered here, we do not claim to provide an exhaustive analysis, nor can we avoid a certain territorial imbalance. Rather, the collaborative nature of this chapter allows us to trace long-term, historical developments, to stress major trends, and to identify problems in traditional approaches to the study of communities.

In the first section we deal with a 'world' formed by communities, an expression we use to denote those social structures in which communities have played a dominant role. We discuss the basic characteristics that describe such communitarian structures and highlight different kinds of relationships between the community and the rest of the social structure. The examples of Icelandic communes and Irish and Scottish clans serve to highlight the main features of this communitarian world. We then discuss the case of religious communities, with particular focus on the development of Jewish communities in ancient times.

The second part highlights the important shifts that contributed to the dissolution or replacement of this world of communities. The rise of new patterns of identification such as human rights theories and nationalist definitions of commonality, confront 'old' models of membership, and in some cases lead to gradually reducing the number of communities allowed to coexist inside a particular political entity. Although the role and position of communities in relation to wider society were profoundly altered this did not mean that communities ceased to exist. Several forms of communities survived these major threats and can arguably be found up to the present day.

Together with this continuity, community has resurfaced in several ways during the final decades of the 20th century. We explain how on some occasions this re-evaluation or rediscovery of community and communitarian explanations of the social world has posed interesting challenges to the composition of nation states and individualistic theories of society⁶. We then briefly analyze a whole new gamut of communitarian relationships, which are especially relevant in as much as they openly break with previous notions of community.

The concept of 'community' has been interpreted in different ways in different historical periods and subjected to different historical approaches. It is striking how some communities are perfectly visible throughout history – religious minorities appear as the clearest example – whereas others are taken for granted and thus remain invisible. In early modern studies, for instance, rural communities are seldom considered from this perspective. However, they become a major focal point of interest when agrarian reforms or other disruptive movements of the 18th and 19th centuries are analysed. It is also clear that the importance assigned to community in history varies from one academic tradition to another, and that it intersects in differing ways with diverse national historical narratives.

Finally, we wish to underscore one last point. Conflict is a fundamental element of community. Competing discourses and power strategies are as important in social and political life as any factors making for commonality. As David Sabean has put it, "what

is common in community is not shared values or common understanding so much as the fact that members of a community are engaged in the same argument ... in which alternative strategies, misunderstandings, conflicting goals and values are threshed out”⁷. We fully subscribe to this emphasis on the entanglement of community and conflict, as we trust the pages below will make clear.

A ‘WORLD’ OF COMMUNITIES

Are there any criteria by which historians can properly judge what actually constitutes a community? One way to answer this question would be to apply to social organization the sorts of categories anthropologists created to designate the various stages of state formation. Clearly some such template is needed when assessing the size and degree of development needed for a human group in order to be considered a community. The use of categorizations of this type helps one to locate the ‘borders’ within which a group is formed (through spatialization and identification with a given territory), as well as its composition (structured by kinship ties and other dynamics of inclusion and exclusion). At the same time one must also pay attention to the amount and quality of external relationships, to degrees of economic and political autonomy, and to the existence of shared cultural codes.

Icelandic communes and Scottish and Irish clans provide examples of these and other basic traits historians focus on when identifying past communities. Not surprisingly, institutionalization takes on special importance for the historian engaged in such a task. Although communes had long existed beforehand, they were first recognized in legal texts that, by attempting to fix certain of their characteristics, make them visible to historians. By considering the relations between communes and chieftainships, this first section illustrates the constant negotiation through which community is given form.

Communities in Medieval Iceland

The division of settlements into communes (*breppr*) was the most important one for the people of the Free State (c. 930-1262/64 AD). There is some uncertainty as to precisely when the system of communes was introduced⁸. Some scholars think it came into being as early as the mid-10th century, while others believe it originated at the end of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th. All agree, however, that the organisation of communes had reached an advanced stage of development by 1096-1097, when tithes were introduced. Significantly, the communes won the right to distribute the tithe revenue intended for the poor, while in other European countries the Church itself distributed this portion of the tithes.

The communes were both social and territorial units with a long history. They may have been modelled on the European guilds. These were religious brotherhoods which, among other things, held communal feasts, offered mutual support in times of need,

and often had their own, internal jurisdiction. The guilds were moreover voluntary associations of people who were not related to each other, and who used the analogy of brotherhood to express solidarity. Finally, their members were probably bound together by oaths. The *Sturlunga saga* mentions guilds at Reykhólar in Reykhólasveit in 1119, at Hvammur in Dalir in 1148, and in the monastery at Þingeyrar in 1182. The editors of the saga state that the latter of these three was probably a guild of priests, and that the two others were craft guilds⁹. Craftsmen formed only a fraction of the population of Iceland and it is unlikely that they had their own guilds. It is more likely that the chieftains controlled these guilds. Both Reykhólar and Hvammur were farms of residence, which suggests that the guilds might have been fellowships for the chieftains and for their assemblymen and friends. Since there is no mention of guilds in the contemporary sagas after 1200, they probably disappeared at the end of the 12th century. Any explanation as to why the guilds did not take root in Iceland lies outside the scope of this study. We can only note that the idea of mutual assistance lived on in the system of the communes.

According to the law-book of the Free State, *Grágás*, every established commune (*lögbreppr*) ought to have in attendance a minimum of 20 assembly-dues-paying farmers (*þingfararkaupsbendr* were farmers who owned a certain minimum of property – a cow, a boat, or a net – for each person in their household), even if the Law Council could admit fewer. The communes were independent units with clear geographical borders led by five communal leaders (*sóknarmenn*), elected for one year periods. They enjoyed self-government in a number of internal matters, quite independent of the chieftains. Three regular meetings were held each year, and extraordinary meetings could be called if necessary. In the Free State the family was primarily responsible for looking after its own members. If it was unable to do so, or if there were no relatives, this duty fell to the communes, the spring assembly courts, the Quarters, or the country as a whole. One of the main duties of the commune was to carry out this task. Communal leaders had to distribute tithes and food to the poor, and organise their movements around the commune. Every assembly-dues-paying farmer had to provide hospitality for the poor for a certain period of time, the duration of which was related to his wealth.

The commune's other main task was to arrange mutual insurance among the farmers. The latter had jointly to pay half the compensation needed in the case of a farmer losing more than a quarter of his cattle and horses, or if part of his farm buildings (including dwellings, outhouses for washing and baking, and food stores) burned down. This compensation was not to be paid out more than three times to the same farmer and was not to constitute more than 1% of the wealth of each farmer, even if it did not cover half the damage. If any farmer wished to give more, it would be strictly on a voluntary basis. The communes probably also saw to the rounding up of sheep in the autumn and the construction of roads and bridges. In such responsibilities of everyday life, the geographical community played a more important role than did family ties.

The first boundaries drawn in Iceland appear to have been the original settlement and farm boundaries. If we compare boundaries from the original (first) settlement as shown in Haraldur Matthíasson's book, *Landið og Landnáma*, with the commune boundaries as they were around the year 1700, they are often identical. Haraldur Matthíasson studied the area between Þjórsá and Hvítá with this aim in mind. He concluded that the commune boundaries always coincided with settlement boundaries. He also suggested that from the very outset these communes were fellowships under the leadership of the settler and his relatives¹⁰. In the court rolls from around 1700 there are 17 communes with *sveit* as the last syllable in their names, all of them in the Western and Southern Quarters. The sagas tell us that chieftains lived in 12 of them, for longer or shorter periods. This could indicate that *sveit* denoted a fellowship led by a chieftain.

We do not know how many communes there were in the Free State, but in the early 18th century there were 163, and there is much to indicate that the number had remained constant since the High Middle Ages. There were 54 communes in the Western Quarter, 45 in the Northern, 24 in the Eastern, and 40 in the Southern¹¹. If we use these numbers to calculate the average number of assembly-dues-paying farmers attending assemblies, in every quarter around the year 1100, the numbers are as follows: 20 in the Western Quarter, 32 in the Northern, 35 in the Eastern, and 30 in the Southern.

Both Martina Stein-Wilkeshuis and William I. Miller argue that the communes were independent and not dependent on the chieftains¹². This is dubious. The farmers were subordinated to the chieftains, and it is highly unlikely that they controlled any local institution without the chieftains being involved. In communes in which chieftains resided, and in communes that formed part of the heartlands of chieftains, the latter were the actual governors. The clearest evidence for the subordinate position of the leaders of the commune vis-à-vis the chieftains, can be found in a document dating from around the year 1245, in which the chieftain Sæmundr Ormsson laid down rules not only for the use of the common land in Hornafjörður, but also for the duties of the leaders of the communes¹³.

According to *Grágás*, it was the leaders of the communes who granted *bygðarleyfi*, or permission to live and stay in the local area¹⁴. This was probably true of peripheral parts of the country, but not of those in the heartlands. The chieftains could not allow assemblymen and friends of rival chieftains to reside in neighbouring farms. It was important for the chieftains to control the heartlands and to have loyal supporters residing there whom they could muster at short notice in times of crisis. The chieftains' control over the settlement partly explains the high level of mobility in the Free State period and the fact that farmers frequently changed allegiance from one chieftain to another.

The powers of the chieftains over the communes meant that they managed a social institution which could be used, among other things, to help the poor. But the provisions for those in need do not seem to have been implemented in strict accordance with the law. This led to the chieftains taking on some of the responsibility for the poor

themselves. Many of the records of the richest churches, dating from the 12th and 13th centuries, contain regulations stating that they were expected to take in one or two children or paupers. The chieftains controlled most of these institutions and often fed more paupers than the church records stipulated.

The control that the chieftains exercised over the districts and local areas, as well as the communes in which these were found, gave the chieftaincies a clear geographical identity. The main duty of the chieftain locally was to maintain and protect the peace in his chieftaincy. This generated confidence and commitment on the part of the farmers. Should he have failed to maintain order there was the danger that some of the farmers could have moved away and transferred their allegiance to another chieftain. Einarr Þorgilsson, for example, lost some of his assemblymen because the farmers disliked his way of governing the district: “men thought there must be quite a different way of governing the district from that which Þorgils used”. The only thing they could do was to move to where they could expect to have “greater security and better support (*trausts at ván*)”¹⁵. The farmers sought a stronger and more authoritative chieftain, who could protect them and their interests. One important duty of such leaders was to settle disputes between their own assemblymen and friends. The chieftain had to satisfy both parties, otherwise he risked losing the support of one of them.

In 1262-1264 Iceland became a part of the Norwegian kingdom and in the years 1271 and 1281 two new law books, *Járnsíða* and *Jónsbók*, were introduced that reshaped the political structure of the country. The General Assembly, which had been an independent legislative and judicial institution, now became a law court and the highest authority for the delegated government of Iceland. After the changes in 1271 and 1281, the king’s official administration in Iceland consisted of one *hirðstjóri* or *höfuðsmaðr* [superior commissioner]. The *hirðstjóri* was the leader of the king’s retinue in Iceland and consequently the most powerful man in the country. The *lögmennt* [lawmen] were two in number after 1277; their work concerned judicial matters at the General Assembly. They led the work of the court and chaired the *Lögrétta* [Law Council], which had become a court instead of a legislative body; legislative power was now in the hands of the king. The country was divided into 12 *sýslur* [sheriffs’ districts], with the *sýslumenn* [sheriffs] vested with the right of public prosecution and executive authority. *Jónsbók* allowed for the possibility that one sheriff could govern a whole quarter; in this case he was to have his representatives stationed throughout the area. The sheriffs received their offices directly from the king, provided there was a king in Norway, and if not, from the high commissioner¹⁶.

Járnsíða and *Jónsbók* did not change the institutional roles and organization of the communes to any great extent. There were still to be five commune leaders. Unlike the rule in *Grágás*, they could now sit as long as they wanted. An important argument for a shift in the role of communes is that in sources describing the period before 1270 they are hardly mentioned, while they appear frequently after that. It is therefore likely that the

five commune leaders now started to play a major role in the communes, and that the commune took on the functions it would retain for the next 600 years.

Clanship in Scotland and Ireland

Community life in rural Europe during the medieval and early modern eras varied greatly in its degree of organization. The Icelandic example outlined here represents a relatively low level of institutionalization. The higher end of the scale was found elsewhere, in cities, and above all cities in Mediterranean Europe. It was there where the far from linear process of political and legal articulation of community advanced furthest. Urban inhabitants throughout Europe assembled their communities along two parallel lines. On a macro level they looked to the city itself as a *communitas*, and thus endowed citizenship with an aura of moral and religious as well as pragmatic obligation. Hence the name *commune* for what emerged as the most developed expression of sub-monarchical political organization in the Middle Ages, the city-states of northern and central Italy. Yet within this self-defined pact for mutual association and defence there proliferated numerous smaller communities. The most influential among these were guilds, that is, collective organizations of producers united in their determination to wield broad control over vital sectors of the urban economy. The city wound up serving as the venue that brought together these political and economic, macro and micro dimensions. As such it provided arguably the single most visible form of institutionalization of community in Europe prior to the rise of the imaginary community of the nation-state.

Still, until the later 19th century most Europeans continued to live in the countryside. Tracing the long-term history of community requires never losing sight of the rural context, and the various and often conflicting ways in which it shaped the patterns and purposes of communal organization. Our second example – also from northern Europe – provides further insight into the basic features of rural communities by taking into account, for example, the relevance of the mythical origins of community and of the cultural devices that transmit the images of a shared past. Seen from this vantage point, the existence and prevalence of communitarian organization needs to be interpreted in terms other than the absence of overriding political authority – be it city or state – or of commercial activity. The redistributive economy characterized by hosting and feuding is more visible and more easily ascribed to communitarian explanations, but it coexisted with commerce and other stable forms of economic relations. Military roles and demonstrations, such as the display of clansmen, had both social and recreational functions, and peaceful forms of relation helped to maintain and give coherence to this communitarian world. This example also highlights the significance of ‘immaterial’ power, prestige and property, and how their management conflicted with other legal systems based on written records and usually designed for structures larger than face-to-face communities. This section moreover pays attention to changes in communitar-

ian structures over the centuries. Attention to the comparative dimension shows that communities are subject to a constant evolution which does not depend exclusively on disruptive initiatives from external structures of power.

The clan (*a'chlann*), literally the children, was an organic not an imagined community, based on real and fictitious ties of kinship in both Scotland and Ireland in the medieval and early modern periods. More than an association of individuals, the clan was a living construct of political, social, economic, judicial and cultural significance. The clan was bound together by the myth of common ancestry as articulated by the hereditary genealogist (*seanchaidh*). Long lineage of the chiefs and leading gentry of the clan was seen as the guarantee of order and justice for their followers. At the same time the deferential panegyric of the hereditary poet (*bard*) extolled the hospitality, heroism, patronage and protection of the clan elite, the *fine* to whom their followers owed allegiance and diverse military and financial services. The common Gaelic culture in Scotland and Ireland was also furthered by hereditary sculptors who commemorated the *fine* through grave stones and other monumental works; and by hereditary mediciners who rose to prominence at the Renaissance when they first imported classical ideas of medicine transmitted through Arabic sources in Spain. Clanship in both countries also had common traditions in relation to such group activities as hunting and hosting, feuding and raiding. Notwithstanding a shared Celtic mythology, a common Gaelic culture and similar customary practices, clanship in Scotland and Ireland differed significantly in its social composition and in its political circumstances. Indeed, the emergence of clans had less to do with Celtic origins or Gaelic ethnicity than with political turmoil and social opportunity in the High Middle Ages.

Clan genealogies looked back to mythological heroic origins, particularly those constructed in the 17th and early 18th centuries when traditional community values were under threat from commercialised estate management and centralised state formation. Most powerful clans had appropriated for themselves fabulous origins to reinforce their political status and glorify their lineage. The rivalry of two clans stands out in this respect. The ClanDonald and ClanCampbell were both of Celtic origin. Their rivalry was traced to the mythical Fingalian heroes Cu-Chulainn and Diarmaid. In reality, the ClanDonald was derived from the Norse-Gaels who dominated both sides of the North Channel from the 9th to the 13th centuries, while the ClanCampbell were of contemporaneous British stock, most probably from the Lennox in central Scotland¹⁷. Other lesser clans, such as the Mackinnons and the MacGregors, were content to claim common ancestry from the Alpin family who united the Scottish kingdom in 843. Only one clan with branches in Ireland and Scotland, the O'Neills in Ulster and the MacNeills on the western seaboard of Scotland, could trace their lineage back to the 5th century – to Niall of the Nine Hostages, High King of Ireland, whose descendants subsequently intermarried with Viking invaders and settled among the Gaels of both countries¹⁸. In reality, the progenitors of the clans in both Scotland and Ireland can rarely be authenti-

cated further back than the 11th century. A continuity of lineage in most clans cannot be clearly established until the 13th century and some not until the 15th.

The conventional perspective of historians who base themselves on the records of central government is that clanship was a product of disorder and weak royal authority¹⁹. But this perspective on the Gaelic problem can easily be turned around, particularly when intrusive central governments in Scotland and Ireland endeavoured to undermine clanship from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Clans were communities created by local initiatives to promote security of settlement, not a loose association of unruly individuals as imagined by central government. Clanship was partly a product of and partly a positive response to political upheaval and social dislocation in the High Middle Ages. In Scotland these were: the Crown's sponsorship of Anglo-Norman migration from the 12th century; the subsequent suppression of Celtic rebellions in Galloway in the south-west and Moray in the north-east; the absorption of former Vikings as the Norse-Gaels into the kingdom from the 13th century; and, above all, the ongoing Wars of Independence from England throughout the 14th century. Opportunities were thus created for lay and even ecclesiastical warlords. With the assistance of their immediate kindred, these warlords imposed their dominance over diverse localities whose indigent families accepted their protection either willingly or by force. These emergent clans led by warlords can be viewed as Celtic in that their origins ranged from Gaelic to Norse-Gael to British. However, the political instability and social dislocation that created scope for territorial expansion also allowed an influx of Anglian, Anglo-Norman and Flemish families from the Lowlands into the Highlands where the vitality of clanship was intimately bound up with the survival of Gaelic culture; a culture that was regressing geographically in Scotland from the 13th century.

In Ireland, the demise of the high kingship in the 10th century had given free rein to warlords building up their territorial influence in the four provinces of Ulster, Connaught, Leinster and Munster. The warring clans of the Gaels and the Norse-Gaels were supplemented by professional military cadres of displaced clansmen such as the MacSweens or McSweeney from Scotland known as the *gallowglass*, essentially professional swords for hire, who moved permanently to Ireland and ranged across the provinces in search of glory and booty. The intrusion of the English Crown in Irish affairs at the behest of the papacy in the later 12th century, signposted a sharp divergence from Scotland in the development of clanship. Although the authority of the English Crown rarely extended beyond Dublin and its Pale in Leinster, the intrusion of Anglo-Normans did not lead to their ready absorption within Gaelic society as in Scotland. They certainly engaged in territorial wars or feuds and even hired *gallowglass*. But even when they intermarried or appeared to go native, their adoptive identity as the Anglo-Irish remained distinctive from that of the Irish Gael. This distinction, in turn, perpetrated a fundamental difference in how clanship was perceived and developed in Scotland and Ireland despite similar social customs and cultural traditions. Before we explore the

differences that were compounded by the Protestant Reformations and British state formation in the early modern period, we should examine the common practices of the clans that prevailed in the late Middle Ages.

Clans in both Scotland and Ireland were identified by their predilection for feuding and feasting, that is for territorial rivalries and the redistribution of booty and food rents through the hospitality offered in the households and great halls of the *fine*. However, the relative scarcity of town and chartered markets within Scottish and Irish Gaeldom signified not so much a dearth of commerce as a widespread aversion to the payment of customs and other fiscal dues. Indeed, the redistributive nature of estate management among the clans can be overstated¹²⁰. The *fine* derived rents from the commercial marketing of livestock and even from fighting men, known as caterans, who earned illicit income by serving as swords for hire in Lowland Scotland or among the Anglo-Irish.

Payments to the *fine* in money, in kind and in labour services, were channelled through the Scottish townships or Irish townlands and managed by the lesser gentry as the lynchpins of clanship, who gave tangible force to protection, hospitality and the productive use of clan resources. Their managerial role was intended to attain a comfortable sufficiency for the farmers and labourers as well as for the clan elite. Until the advent of written leasing in the 16th century, the holdings of the lesser gentry were held from the *fine* according to oral tradition. As indicative of a growing commercialism, particularly among the Scottish clans, the lesser gentry were given written leases or tacks which not only prescribed the expectations of the elite. But tacks also made these expectations in terms of rents and labour services renegotiable and more remunerative for the *fine*. In the process, the lesser clan gentry in Scotland became known as the tacksmen and, in keeping with rising rents, were expected to adapt the customary farming practices pursued by the four to sixteen families who settled every township or townland. The tacksmen oversaw the reallocation of strips of land in open fields held as run-rig by individual families, arranged for crop manuring and herding, and organised the movement to summer pastures on upland and island shielings. They collected the rents (from which they apportioned a share for their own use) and were responsible for controlling the amount of crops sown, work-services performed and the numbers of livestock grazed. Incoming and newly inheriting tenants were given loans of seed corn, livestock and tools. Their needs for such grants in steelbow were assessed by the tacksmen of their allotted township or townland. The tacksmen also played a key role in the rounding up and marketing of cattle, sheep and horses through the droving of livestock to markets.

Prior to the 17th century, their managerial role tended to be viewed as secondary to their military role as mobilizers of the clan host. Notwithstanding the martial exhortations of the bards and the impressive number of clansmen who could be mobilised expeditiously on passing round the fiery cross from township to township, the calling out of the host was as much social and recreational as military. The host was mobilised particularly during the summer downturn in the agrarian cycle to provide gainful en-

tainment for clansmen who might otherwise drift into banditry. The month of August was traditionally assigned for the hunts when the chiefs, their kinsmen and elite guests were attended by their followers to act as beaters and to engage in a variety of virile sports. A large turn-out of followers was also expected for weddings and funerals. A chief with few clansmen in attendance was deemed to have detracted from his personal standing. The substantial mobilisation of clansmen to perambulate and demarcate the estates of their clan elite served to discourage the territorial ambitions of other chiefs and leading clan gentry. However, the calling out of the host for social and recreational reasons was not without a measure of military ambivalence as these occasions, which were especially noted for copious consumption of strong drink, could degenerate into disorder. Drink-fuelled disputes were provoked by slights to individual rank and precedence and were fanned by a highly developed sense of personal honour among clansmen as well as their *fine*.

Feuding was essentially an issue of honour as well as ambition, usually occasioned when the chief of one clan claimed territories settled by another. Acquisitive clans, most notably the Campbells and the MacKenzies in Scotland and the O'Neills and O'Donnells in Ireland, were prepared to play off territorial disputes within and among clans to expand their own landed influence. Feuding was conducted with such intensity that the MacLeods and the MacDonalds on the Isle of Skye were reputedly reduced to eating dogs and cats in the 1590s. Feuding was further compounded by the involvement of Scottish clans in the wars of the Irish Gaels against the English Tudor monarchy in the 16th century. Indeed, within these clans from the western seaboard, the caterans as a military caste became known as 'redshanks' or *buannachan* who migrated seasonally to Ireland to fight as mercenaries in return for cash bounties and food levies. These *buannachan* were, like the tacksmen, regarded as part of the lesser gentry though they were not engaged in estate management. When not contracted by the Irish Gaels or even the Anglo-Irish, they lived parasitically off their own clan communities, being billeted on townships as a ready reservoir of manpower to perpetuate feuding²¹.

The military ethos of clanship in both Scotland and Ireland was furthered by the cattle raid or *creach*, a ritualistic rite of passage whereby the young men of the clan, led by the future elite, demonstrated their virility by removing livestock from neighbouring clans. As this was an accepted practice, the ritualistic raid was usually compensated by the payment of reparations rather than becoming the cause of intensified feuding. Even when clans indulged in the *spreidh* as a freelance reiving operation often outside the territorial bounds of Scottish or Irish Gaeldom, the livestock 'lifted' in the course of plundering could usually be recovered by the payment of 'tascal' (information money) and the guarantee of indemnity from a criminal prosecution. In Scotland, certain clans, such as the MacFarlanes in the southern and the Farquharsons in the eastern Highlands, offered their services as a professional watch for their Lowland neighbours, although their rates for protection verged on the extortionate and led to accusations of 'blackmail'.

While hosting, feuding and raiding were customs which defined clans through antagonistic relations, the most important amicable practices that bonded clans as communities were marriage and fosterage. The marriage alliances between Gaels in both countries reinforced links across the North Channel between the western seaboard of Scotland and Ulster, as with neighbouring clans. Marriage alliances also cemented ties of kinship within clans, which were settled in diverse locations. Marriage moreover involved a commercial contract which included the exchange of livestock, money and land through payments which in Scotland, in the case of the bride were known as 'tocher' and for the groom, the 'dowry'. The *fine* of the clan was expected collectively to underwrite contracts entered into individually by the chief or any of the leading gentry. This constituted a legal obligation which grew in importance as increasing numbers of marriage contracts were made outside Gaeldom in the course of the 17th century as the clans focused on securing their positions within Scotland and Ireland rather than intermarrying across the North Channel. As borne out by trial marriages, such a handfasting for the production of male heirs, marriage was the least durable aspect of social bonding between and within the clans. Fosterage was the bringing up of the chief's children by a neighbouring chief or by favoured leading gentry of his own clan and, in turn, their children by other favoured members of the clan. This custom created ties of such intensity that it was not regarded as exceptional for foster-brothers to sacrifice themselves in protecting their chiefs. The commercial facet of this relationship reinforced feelings of clan cohesion in making particular provision, usually in the form of livestock, for foster-children on their reaching adulthood or on the death of their foster-parents.

Another social tie prevalent in Scotland but difficult to document in Ireland was manrent. This was a bond contracted by the heads of satellite families who did not live on the estates of the clan elite, but to whom they affiliated to ensure protection. Bonds of manrent were reinforced by 'calps' as death duties. On the death of the satellite heads, their families usually paid their best cow or horse to the chief in recognition of his protection and as a mark of personal allegiance. Although central government disapproved of calps, as they took priority over the allegiance due by tenants to their landlords, the need to protect communities could not be prescribed by legislation. Manrent continued covertly. While it was apparently less frequent after the practice was proscribed in 1617, bonds were made less to create new ties of dependency than to renew protection after a lapse of a generation, and notably after the political divisions occasioned by civil wars in the 1640s and between 1689 and 1691²².

The greater stress on contracting in Scotland than in Ireland reflects a different path of community development in both countries. Certainly, in Ireland as in Scotland, the actual settlement of land by the clans depended on the strength of family affinities; in essence, the blood ties of kinship supplemented local ties of kindness and friendship between the *fine*, their tenants and other associates among their followers. However, in Scotland, clanship had an added feudal dimension in that conditions of landholding

were specified by the feud contract as conveyed heritably by charter either from a powerful magnate or directly from the Crown. As the Irish Gaels disdained and disregarded charters from the English Crown and from powerful magnates, their clanship cannot be viewed like that of the Scottish Gaels as a collective product of feudalism, kinship and local association. Clans in both countries were made up of the dominant kindred and its cadet lines, of its original associates and of other satellite families who affiliated at later dates. This association can be viewed as confederal. But in Scotland, most clans added the feudal dimension through charters acquired by their chiefs and leading gentry. It was exceptional rather than the rule for Scottish clans to be viewed as no more than territorial confederations. Thus, the Clan Chattan in the central Highlands continued to be cited as a confederation primarily because their *fine* had limited feudal control over the territory settled by their followers until the 17th century²³.

The right as well as the obligation of the chief and leading gentry, individually and collectively as the *fine*, to protect and administer justice to their clan constituted their *duthchas*: their personal, but hereditary, authority to exercise trusteeship throughout the territory settled prescriptively and traditionally by their followers. This concept meant that the personal authority of the chiefs and leading gentry as trustees for their clan was recognised by the whole community. Thus, justification for the authority of the *fine* came from below and from within the clan. Complementing territorial trusteeship was the *oighbreachd* of the *fine*, that is, their individual, but hereditary, title to their estates and jurisdictions as recorded in charters from the Crown or other powerful magnates who held estates in Highlands and Lowlands. The concept of individual heritage gave a different emphasis to the basis of their authority which was now warranted from above. It institutionalised the authority of the chiefs and leading gentry as landed proprietors – owners of the land in their own right, rather than as trustees for their clan's collective good. The Irish clans shared the concept of *duthchas*, but not that of *oighbreachd* as they set their face against acceptance of charters. However, there was a charter deficit in Scotland which remained the principal cause of clan feuding until the later 17th century. Where the estates comprising the *oighbreachd* of the elite failed to match up to the territories claimed as the collective *duthchas* of the community of the clan, clansmen were obliged to pay rents to chiefs and leading gentry of other clans as their landlords. Of course the two concepts of *duthchas* and *oighbreachd* could co-exist harmoniously. From the outset of clanship in Scotland the *fine* strove to be landlords as well as territorial warlords. But the commercial stimulus of landownership meant that *fine* inexorably moved away from clanship based upon the redistribution of surpluses through feasting and feuding towards the commercial marketing of produce and labour in the early modern period.

Through the acquisition of charters and acceptance of allegiance to the Scottish Crown, clanship in Scottish Gaeldom operated within the framework of Scots Law. This situation again stood in marked contrast to clanship in Irish Gaeldom whose social structures were largely antipathetic to the legal codification afforded by English common

law²⁴. The Gaels in both countries had a common legal code, the Brehon law, upheld by hereditary lawyers in the clans. However, the Brehon Law was by no means a static or rigid code incapable of separate development in both countries. Moreover, the Brehon Laws cannot be deemed applicable to all Scottish as well as Irish clans. Clans outside the western seaboard adhered to other codes such as the laws of the Clan Macduff, which prevailed in the central Highlands until absorbed within Scots Law in the course of the Middle Ages²⁵. In Ireland, as in Scotland, the succession of heirs, the settling of disputes through arbitration, the paying of reparations as assythment and the indemnifying against further actions of redress were all issues governed by customary judicial practices. But only in Scotland could clans make legally binding contracts recognised by central government that promoted hereditary succession through primogeniture or by entails that secured estates in the male line for generations. At the same time, arbitration, assythment and indemnities were ‘ad hoc’ decisions made by panels of clansmen representing the aggrieved and offending parties that were given added force of law when lodged in the records of central or local government. Conflict resolution was furthered by the regular contracting of bonds of friendship between clans. These bonds made standing provision for arbitration and facilitated prompt payment of reparations and the issuing of indemnities as ‘letters of slains’ under the auspices of Scots Law without having to resort to the due process of the civil or criminal courts.

The different paths for the development of clanship in Scotland and Ireland became pronounced in the early modern period with the accomplishment of a Protestant Reformation in Scotland and a Catholic Counter-Reformation in Ireland. At the same time, the clans in both countries were treated differently following the regal union of 1603 when James VI of Scotland became James I of England and Ireland. James actually saw himself as King of Great Britain and Ireland and he was intent on a policy of British state formation which would civilize the political and cultural frontiers peopled by the clans. This policy was to be accomplished by the expropriation of unruly or disorderly clans, by plantations to replace existing Gaelic communities and by encouragement of the *fine* to integrate into the landed classes in Scotland and Ireland rather than pursue the concept of Gaeldom without regard to the wishes of central government in London, Edinburgh and Dublin. The immediate cultural reaction of the clans was to shift away from the classical if stereotyped poetry of the bards towards the contemporary commentary of vernacular poets who wrote respectively in Scottish Gaelic to voice their political and social criticisms of state formation and in Irish Gaelic to uphold the Counter-Reformation and the integrity of Ireland as a kingdom not a colony²⁶. Frontier policy was also markedly more lenient towards the clans in Scotland than in Ireland where the policy of expropriation and plantation, first pioneered by the Tudor monarchy in Munster, was extended under James I to Ulster and then by his Stuart successor, Charles I, to Connacht. Plantation of settlers from England and Scotland was also accompanied by the imposition of English common law which accorded no place for the judicial practices of the Irish clans²⁷.

In Scotland, few clans were actually expropriated and even where the *fine* was removed, traditional communities were not displaced to make way for plantations of incomers. Notwithstanding the willingness of central government to overplay the disorderly behaviour of the ClanDonald and their associates on either side of the North Channel, the retention of Gaelic as against Scottish or Irish priorities was not shared by all the clans on the western seaboard, far less those in the southern, central, eastern and northern Highlands²⁸. In Scotland, the clear emphasis was on encouraging assimilation among the landed classes in the Highlands and Lowlands, an ongoing process for the *fine* from the 16th century, which was now promoted aggressively by the central government on the western seaboard. Like the *caballeros villanos* in Spain, the military caste that protected towns in the course of the Reconquest from the Arabs, the *buannachan* were also rendered redundant at the outset of the 17th century²⁹. Denied military employment in Ireland by the policy of plantation and expropriation at the expense of the Irish Gael, the *buannachan* were faced with a choice of piracy or becoming productive estate workers. Like the caterans elsewhere in Scottish Gaeldom, those who chose a life of banditry came to be viewed as predators estranged from clan communities. At the same time, the clan elite in Scotland came to be regarded as ‘de facto’ agents for local government. They were bound over to provide bands of surety, promising the orderly conduct of themselves and their clansmen, a term which now included not only the tenants on their estates but all followers who owed territorial allegiance, including anyone resident within their bounds for more than twelve hours. Although these bands carried considerable financial penalties and included the threat of forfeiture for persistent non-compliance, their issue by central government on behalf of the Stuart monarchy recognised that Scottish Gaeldom could not be governed without the co-operation of the *fine*.

Nevertheless, central government’s insistence on annual accountability led chiefs and leading clan gentry to spend prolonged and expensive sojourns in the Lowlands. Their absenteeism led to accumulating debts that severely strained and, in some cases, outstripped their financial resources despite increased rents. ‘Wadsets’ or mortgages which were invariably used by the *fine* to raise money, particularly after the civil wars of the 1640s, confirmed their commitment to Scottish as against Gaelic politics. With the expansion of droving from the Highlands through the Lowlands into England to supply the growing demand for beef in London during the later 17th century, tacksmen had sufficient funds to finance these mortgages, which led to their acquisition of landed status as the debts were secured against the revenues of the clan elite’s estates. When the debts could not be discharged, the tacksmen became the landowners. The consequent expansion of landownership among the tacksmen meant that they, in turn, became liable for bands of surety. By the 1680s, this expansion meant that for the first time the estates of the *fine*, held individually as their *oighbreachd*, largely coincided with the territories settled collectively as the *duthchas* of their clansmen. The acceptance of responsibility by

old as well as new landowners for the conduct of their tenants and followers can directly be related to the decline of banditry as well as feuding in the late 17th century³⁰.

While the clan elite were encouraged to assimilate into the landed classes in Scotland, they faced eradication in Ireland as expropriation and plantation under the early Stuarts was revived by the English Parliament to punish the Confederation of Irish Catholics for their willingness to assist the Royalist cause of Charles I during the civil wars of the 1640s. Further convulsions resulted from the conquest and colonisation of Ireland under Oliver Cromwell and the English regicides during the 1650s. On this occasion, Irish Gaels were also forced into indentured labour in English plantations in North America and the Caribbean or into military service with France and Spain³¹. A further round of expropriations, plantations and expulsions followed on from the failure of the first Jacobite rising, principally fought in Ireland in opposition to the revolution of 1688-1691, when James VII and II, a converted Roman Catholic, was replaced by his implacably Protestant son-in-law, William of Orange. Gaels recruited into the Irish brigades of France and Spain could still aspire to return to restore the exiled Stuarts well into the 18th century. More prosaically, other Gaels took to banditry as rapparees, using Jacobitism as a cover for their predatory and thuggish activities. But for the Irish Gaels as a whole, Jacobitism represented a dream of deliverance from an English ascendancy, which was never realised in the 18th century³². Deliverance was only partially to be achieved in the early 20th century when clanship was no more than a folk memory.

Whereas the Irish Gael dreamt of Jacobitism, the Scottish Gael died for Jacobitism. A few clans sided with William of Orange and subsequently with the Hanoverian dynasty, whose accession in 1714 affirmed the permanent exile of the Stuarts. However, the majority of the clans supported the traditional dynastic and patriotic appeal of Jacobitism, particularly as it appeared to offer the best prospect for terminating the incorporating union with England effected in 1707. The clans were the bedrock of support for the main Jacobite risings in 1689-90, 1715-1716 and 1745-1746. But the failure of these risings exposed the clans to an escalating series of reprisals that culminated in forfeiture for the *fine* of Jacobite clans and the transportation, starvation and extermination of their followers by a British government displaying a degree of military ruthlessness that veered from state terrorism towards genocide. Nevertheless, the demise of clanship in Scotland cannot solely be attributed to a bloodthirsty British regime. Jacobitism exposed a growing gulf between the elite and their followers as the *fine* sought to pursue commercialised estate management that prioritised commodities over communities. The wholesale removal and relocation of farmers and labourers and even tacksmen from the townships, which commenced in the 1730s, was held in check by the persistence of Jacobitism. With the failure and ruthless repression of the last major rising, the *fine* threw over the traditional obligations of clanship and insisted on their right to clear their followers. They realigned their *oighreachd* with commercial landlordism. Clan communities, deprived of elite leadership, moved from an organic and vertical con-

struct to a horizontal association of peasants and artisans who held on to the concept of *duthchas* as they dispersed into rural slums, urban ghettos or migrant ships³³.

RELIGION AND DIFFERENT COMMUNITARIAN CIRCLES

The differences in size, complexity, and historical development explored in the previous pages make clear the risks of engaging in a search for a ‘true community’. As Michael Halvorson and Karen Spierling have suggested, it is “extremely difficult, if not impossible, to define in absolute, analytical terms a particular size, political structure, or expected life-cycle of a community”³⁴. A world of communities is therefore not an ideal state, but rather a metaphor through which one conveys the dynamic character of conflicting and competing communities which coexist in time and space. These plural communities moreover do not exist in isolation. Rather, they are integrated into larger power structures, where their differential characteristics, obligations and privileges find institutional recognition. State structures strengthen the binding power of communities by habitually ascribing individuals to collective frameworks, and treat them as forming part of a given community rather than as a single unit directly related to total social structure.

It was Georg Simmel who argued that communities could be best studied and understood when they were thought of as collections of overlapping entities or ‘circles’ that meet one another at points of common interest, dispute, or compromise³⁵. As the examples above have already indicated, the community is always confronted by conflicting interests both from inside and outside. In early modern states we can locate some telling examples which show the coexistence of populations ascribed to different communities as defined by kinship, political institutions or allegiance, occupation, economic or social status, gender, age, or religion, among other possibilities³⁶. These circles of communities gain greatest visibility in large urban centres, such as the cities of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries.

In a previous volume in this series Blanka Szeghyová focuses on the multiple linguistic or ethnic communities which coexisted in the Hungarian kingdom during the early modern era³⁷. Her work illustrates how conflict and cooperation between these communities intermingled with other social and economic allegiances. In the same volume Markéta Rubešová explores the heterogeneity of the Ottoman Empire and how the multiple collective and individual identities which it contained were defined by “mental boundaries” that were “fluid and often permeable”³⁸. Her chapter shows that different religious communities coexisted physically in the same streets and houses, while maintaining their distinctive identities. Different legal systems for Muslims and non-Muslims, marked by varying levels of authority and self-government similarly coexisted, giving rise to a situation marked by continual testing, shaping, and negotiating of communitarian boundaries.

Religious difference has traditionally been a key factor in defining the borders of a community. Apart from being a major criterion for self-identification with a broader collectivity, religious difference has very often been subjected to extensive legal codification, including specific regulations of cult areas, schooling, marriage, taxation, economic activities and other matters. Probably due to this institutionalization of boundaries, such communities have been given a great deal of attention by historians. In the same vein as Rubešová's chapter, the place of urban Jewish communities has been analyzed by Luísa Trindade in terms of their differentiation, coexistence and participation in civic space³⁹. In another volume of the CLIOHRES series, Elena Brambilla raises interesting questions regarding rituals of inclusion and exclusion in religious communities and about the public expression of membership in such communities through compulsory acts such as Easter confession and communion⁴⁰.

Our next example examines the basic characteristics of Jewish communities in Biblical times. Centred in the ancient lands of Israel/Palestine, the earliest and the most important Hebraic communities took shape in the city of Jerusalem and in its surrounding area. Shortly thereafter, other communitarian sites emerged elsewhere in Palestine. Here communities were established through a series of encounters between the nomadic peoples who inhabited the Near-Eastern plains and the sedentary inhabitants of those lands given over to primitive agriculture.

From their nucleus in Israel/Palestine, Jewish communities gradually expanded into other areas of the ancient and medieval world. Apart from some early examples, such as the temple of Elephantine in southern Egypt around the 6th-5th centuries BC, the so-called Jewish Diaspora intensified around the time of Alexander the Great (336-323 BC). Sources from the Hellenistic period (323-331 BC) document many communities of Jews residing throughout the Near East and in parts of Asia Minor and Egypt. Later on, in the Roman era, further development of trade routes and the intensification of cultural contacts led large communities to emerge in Rome and along the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts.

In the Classical period, many Jewish communities arose in Syro-Jewish areas, such as Apamea, Antioch and Dura-Europos⁴¹. We are now aware of the growth and importance of these centres, especially later, under Roman and Christian rule. Our focus here, however, will center on Egypt and Asia Minor: the former due to its historical primacy regarding its serving as the location of the first documented synagogue as well as being the site of the Greek redaction of Mosaic Law; the latter, because the communities of Asia Minor served as a crucial entry-way into Europe. The following pages deal with two fundamental elements of the Jewish Diaspora: the narrow ties between Jewish collectives and Mosaic Law, and the consolidation of the synagogue as a place for prayer, study, and social relations among members of the same communities.

Regarding the Jewish Diaspora: generally speaking, the word *diaspora* refers to the transfer of a people from its original place to other, recognizable locations⁴². It derives from

the Greek *diaspeiro*, meaning to broadcast or to diffuse. Later, the term *diaspora* was associated with the forced movement of a people to a foreign country and not to normal, uncoerced migration. According to tradition, the Jewish Diaspora started around the 14th to 13th centuries BC, when enslaved Hebrews were removed from their settlements and scattered in other parts of the Middle East. This period witnessed the formation of the first diaspora communities, but the sources are so fragmentary that it is impossible accurately to assess their size and importance. It was at this point, however, that the question of diaspora first emerged as an important element in Jewish identity thanks to its presence within collective Hebrew memories. The first well-documented case of diaspora was the Babylonian captivity, that is, the deportation ordered by king Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC)⁴³. This experience and the more general question of diaspora did not take long to become closely linked in Jewish history and identity.

Jewish Identity and the Case of Babylon

When examining the constitution and persistence over time of a single community, it is important to evaluate those elements which define its identity. In ancient as well as modern times, Jewish or Hebraic identity was based on the norms and rules of *Torah* (Mosaic Law), known to Christians as the *Pentateuch* or the first Five Books of the Old Testament⁴⁴. The *Torah*, transmitted by God to Moses in order to lead the Chosen People, endowed the Hebrews with a code of behavior that was subject to a centuries-long process of definition and interpretation by a wide range of political and religious writers and commentators. Its subject matter comprises an equally wide spectrum of questions. Some deal with historical or legendary events like, for example, the Creation of the World as detailed in the book of *Genesis*, or the Flight from Egypt in the book of *Exodus*. In addition, there are many passages related to norms and laws. *Exodus* contains the famous code known as the Ten Commandments⁴⁵, but the most extensive regulation is found in *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy*. These norms, while linked to religious behaviour, deal with many aspects of Jewish life, including politics, economic activities, relations with foreigners, marriage and family life, foodways, and the like.

Many of these norms served directly to structure Jewish identity, a function far from unusual among sacred writings. It is a commonplace that early Jewish identity was constructed in reaction to the exile in Babylonia⁴⁶. The period following the deportation also witnessed the absorption into Jewish culture of Babylonian traditions. This helps account for the fact that many of the stories which one can read in the Old Testament derived from myths and legends which originated in Mesopotamia, as, for instance, the tale of the Universal Flood or the story of the Tower of Babel⁴⁷. Later on, after the fall of the Chaldaean kings and the rise of the Persian Empire, the descendants of the captives were allowed by the Edict of Cyrus of 538 BC to return to Jerusalem⁴⁸. Their reintegration was marked by conflict with those groups which, by having avoided exile, continued to live according to ancient and local traditions⁴⁹. The encounter between

exiles and the indigenous people of Jerusalem gave rise to what would become known as the Judaism of the Second Temple.

The Hebrew community of Babylon contributed in several ways to Jewish history. For example, its members played a prominent role in the redaction not only of the Book of *Genesis*, but of other Biblical texts. The Babylonian setting was the visible backdrop of the prophecies of both *Jeremiah* and *Daniel*. Moreover, the famous *Psalms* 137, which evokes the desperation of the Jews along the rivers of Babylon, became over the course of time a Jewish symbol for the melancholic condition of exiles in a strange land.

The Hebrews constituted a thriving community in Babylon. Sources inform us of their commercial and business activities in that city⁵⁰. Clay tablets point to an initial interaction there between Jews and Babylonians and, later, in the Hellenistic Age, between Jews and Greeks⁵¹. The Hellenistic Age witnessed one especially interesting event: the transfer, by order of king Antiochus III (223-187 BC), of 2000 families of Hebrew soldiers from Babylon to Lydia and Phrygia for the defence of these territories against domestic revolts⁵². Yet the most important Babylonian testimony to the size and prosperity of this community was the redaction of the *Talmud*, one of the sacred books of Judaism⁵³. The *Talmud*, from the Hebrew root LMD meaning 'instruction' or 'study', consists of a collection of dialogues between sages and masters of spiritual tradition, including discussions of the meaning and application of the norms written in the *Torah*. The *Talmud* contains contributions from the most important Judaic authorities: jurists, thinkers, and scholars who took the name of *rabbanim* (masters) or *hakhamim* (sages). Although it is difficult to identify a precise date of compilation, its redaction probably started after the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem around 70 AD. There are two versions of the *Talmud*: the *Talmud of Jerusalem* and the *Talmud of Babylon*. The latter's greater degree of completion confirms the importance of the Jewish community in Babylon.

The Synagogue

It is clear that the Temple enjoyed absolute preeminence in the process of the reading and transmission of the *Torah* in the city of Jerusalem. Yet eventually a rival center of worship emerged: the synagogue⁵⁴. The word synagogue was a transliteration of the Greek *synagoge* or 'assembly', which corresponds to the Hebrew *Bet Knesset*. Although its precise origins are unknown, it is believed that the concept emerged during the Babylonian Captivity and was brought to Israel by the Jews returning from exile. The oldest archaeological evidence that suggests the existence of a synagogue is an Egyptian inscription from the 3rd century BC. Two centuries later, literary sources described the didactic function of an institution created for the reading of the Law and the instruction of the Ten Commandments⁵⁵. An ancient synagogue forming part of a Maccabean palace and dated between 70 and 50 BC was discovered along the Wadi Qelt located south of Jericho⁵⁶. In addition, certain literary sources dating from the 1st century AD, refer

to the synagogue as an institution that was already consolidated⁵⁷. Until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the center of Jewish culture and religion was the Temple. In this context the synagogue functioned mostly as a place of study. When the Temple was razed to the ground, however, the synagogue emerged as its definitive replacement.

We know that a great part of the Rabbinical Judaism that ensued centered on this new institution. The synagogues determined the precise moments of prayer and all the functions related to the celebration of the Sabbath, and they became thus the place for prayer and for the study of the *Torah*. From antiquity until modern times, the synagogue gradually emerged as the center of all Jewish communities, and served as the most important religious and cultural Jewish building. Its acceptance rested largely on its ability to adapt to the new, decentralized character of a religion formerly centered on Jerusalem and its Temple, and the access it afforded individual Jews to its complex rituals.

Ancient Jewish Communities in Egypt

Egypt played a key role in the history of Judaism thanks to the fact that many Jewish communities emerged in this country and went on to become complex and well-organized centres. In the Scriptures, Egypt appeared as a land of slavery, from which Moses led the Chosen People to eventual safety in the Promised Land⁵⁸. Thereafter this negative connotation disappeared, and we can assume the presence of Hebrews in Egypt over a long span of time. The construction of a temple on the southern island of Elephantine suggests a well-structured society, similar to that of Jerusalem. And in the Hellenistic period this community was joined by others in the northern Delta area⁵⁹.

While no remains of synagogues have been found in Egypt, a large number of synagogue dedications have appeared in archaeological sites. The earliest inscriptions, dating to around the 3rd century BC, have already been alluded to, but many other examples from papyrological and epigraphical documents testify to the presence of these buildings. The earliest example (246-221 BC) is the dedication that was discovered at the site of Schedia, in Lower Egypt, where the Pharaoh Ptolemy and his wife (and sister) Berenice dedicated a synagogue to the Jews⁶⁰. Another was discovered in Xenephyris, near Alexandria, where one can read that King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra dedicated the gateway of a synagogue in 224-216 BC⁶¹. In these two inscriptions (and in many others), the term synagogue was not used; rather, during this period the scribes preferred to use the Greek synonym *proseuke*. Literary sources also mention the widespread presence of synagogues in Egypt. According to the Jewish historian and philosopher Philo, who wrote in the 1st century AD, synagogues could be found in every neighborhood of the city of Alexandria⁶².

One of the most important documents regarding the Jews in Egypt is the famous *Letter of Aristeeas*. This text is not personal correspondence in the strict sense, but a literary narrative describing a series of events⁶³. According to tradition, it was written by Aristeeas, a Greek officer at the court of Ptolemy II (308-246 BC), to his brother Philokrates. In addition to

dealing with happenings at the Ptolemaic court of Alexandria, the letter recounts the important issue of the translation of Jewish Law, i.e. the *Torah*, from Hebrew to Greek. (Writing in the 1st century AD, Philo stated his conviction that this translation was done with the help of God, who caused each translator working on it separately to produce an independent and identical version⁶⁴.) The Letter also contains important information about the interaction between Jews and Greeks in the Ptolemaic period and about the creation and the development of a Jewish community in the city of Alexandria. At first, the demand for a translation of the *Torah* into Greek suggests the presence of a significant community in Alexandria⁶⁵. The letter itself explains this demand as an attempt to reproduce Mosaic Law for the Alexandrian Jews who could not speak or read Hebrew. The eventual production of such a translation confirms the importance of the Jewish community in Alexandria, and suggests that (predictably enough) it looked to the *Torah* for guidance.

Not too far from Alexandria stood the centre of Leontopolis, which had increased its authority during the priestly infighting at the time of the Oniads⁶⁶. The existing sources suggest that this site was built as a Jewish temple and competed for a long of time with the one in Jerusalem for power and prestige. The similarities between both Temples, according to the Jewish historian Josephus⁶⁷, not only underlined their rivalry but also confirmed the persistence of the principal norms of the Jews in distant communities of the ancient Near East.

In certain parts of Roman Egypt one gets the impression that the Jews were characterized by a well defined identity. Here the city of Cyrene offers an interesting example. Josephus, quoting Strabo on the deeds of L. Cornelius Sylla in Asia Minor, recounts in a passage of his *Jewish Antiquities* that the world was full of Jews. He goes on to remark that indeed the Jewish people existed in all parts of the known world, so much so that it was difficult to find a place without a Jewish community⁶⁸. In the next passage Josephus describes the social and civic subdivisions of Cyrene. The city was divided into four different social classes: citizens, farmers, strangers who lived in the city (*metics*), and the Jews⁶⁹. It seems that at the time of Strabo and Josephus, the Jewish community of Cyrene formed a well-defined body, which was included in the civic statutes of the city, and which probably enjoyed some grants and privileges. Shortly thereafter, Josephus also wrote that the Ptolemaic kings encouraged the expansion of the Jewish community, which allowed the formation of well-ordered groups who observed Judaic ancestral norms⁷⁰. Here also the *Torah* proved to be the religious and cultural centre of each community of Jews.

Jewish Communities in Asia Minor

Mention has been already been made of the first case of the transfer of Hebrews in Asia Minor. The importance of this event is underlined by the form of the transfer and by the substantial privileges the king allowed. Antiochus permitted the settlers the use of their own laws and awarded them a specific grant of protection⁷¹. By comparing historical sources one can surmise that the permission granted to the Hebrews to use their le-

gal norms meant their being allowed to follow the laws of the *Torah*; in fact, Antiochus granted the Hebrews permission to live according to Mosaic Law⁷². The desire of the king that no harm should come to the Jews may indicate that Antiochus was keen to create or to install other new communities in certain territories of Asia Minor.

Later, during the Roman conquest of the East, many Jewish communities thrived in Asia Minor⁷³. These probably had their roots in the migration ordered by Antiochus. Sources such as Josephus highlight the flourishing nature of these communities. One major Jewish centre was established in the city of Sardis, the ancient capital of the Seleucids and, in the following period, one of the most important cities in the western territories of Roman Anatolia⁷⁴. Archaeological and epigraphical sources inform us of the existence of a synagogue in this city⁷⁵. The original building appears not to have been constructed for this purpose, as it included rooms related to the civic life of the city, such as a bath-house and a gymnasium⁷⁶. Numerous dedicatory inscriptions have also been found nearby⁷⁷. For example, Josephus tells of a decree, dating from around the second half of first century BCE (probably 47), which granted the Jews permission to assemble together in Sardis in order to pray, to observe their own law, and to obtain a place to live⁷⁸. All these elements confirm not only the presence of a large Jewish community in this city, but also a harmonious interaction between the Jews and the *demos*, or indigenous inhabitants. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the Sardis synagogue survived for a long time, perhaps until the 7th century AD.

Beside Sardis, other Jewish communities arose in Asia Minor, including Ephesus, Miletus, and Laodikeia. In the Roman period, around the time of the consulate of Lucius Lentulus, numerous official documents relating to exemptions from military service report the ongoing presence of Jews⁷⁹. These sources, which Josephus quotes, make clear that such communities were granted the use of their own ancestral laws and permission to celebrate the Sabbath day⁸⁰. Thus, basing ourselves on Josephus, we can assume that Roman administrators accepted the mixture of their own laws with the Jewish legal tradition. This constituted standard practice in Roman provincial administration, and can be assumed to have covered many if not most of the Jewish communities of Asia Minor, especially since public decrees and official letters often report that Jews were granted permission to rule themselves along the guidelines provided in the *Torah*. Finally, comparison with other ancient sites in Syria and Asia Minor strongly suggests that these communities had synagogues or similar institutions which carried out more or less the same religious and social functions.

Conclusion

These few pages provide a brief overview of the more important elements of Jewish communities in ancient times, at least until the Christian Church imposed its hegemony over religious practice in the Roman Empire. The first and the most important element of a Jewish community was adherence to the Law of Moses, or *Torah*. This,

at least, is what the sources suggest, although we do not possess precise information about the extent of observance of individual norms. Moreover, it is arguable that following the Babylonian Captivity Mesopotamian influence penetrated Jewish culture and that this merely increased in later periods with the codification of the *Babylonian Talmud*. Neither did this hinder the autonomous development of Judaism in the city of Babylon.

Egypt and Asia Minor present some important differences. In Egypt, the evolution of Jewish communities seems to have been a gradual process, based on the progressive integration of the Jews with other ethnic groups, such as Greeks and native Egyptians. Moreover, from the Hellenistic Age there exists substantial evidence of sizeable communities which were introduced into Egyptian cities as part of the desire of the Ptolemaic kings to unify and organize the numerous components of their kingdom. Alexandria is probably the most important example and it is not surprising that the legendary story of the Letter of Aristeas originated there.

Apart from the sporadic information related to Antiochus III and the Jews of Babylon, we do not have precise confirmation of the Jewish presence in Asia Minor prior to the Romans. In fact, the existence of some communities is assumed but not verified. It is possible that the relationship between Jewish communities and municipal elites was regulated by means of civic measures, without contact with central authorities. The most important difference between Egypt and Asia Minor regarded government. Ptolemaic kings tried to centralize their power in order to maintain political and social control. In the Hellenistic Age one region of Asia Minor was ruled by Seleucid kings, who administered their territories through a decentralized system. Other regions, however, were made up of cities which were free or semi-free with respect to the central authorities. Thanks above all to the historian Josephus and to some archaeological and epigraphical discoveries, we have the opportunity to reconstruct the creation, organization, and evolution of Jewish communities in Asia Minor during the Roman era. Asia Minor thus represented an important stage in Jewish community development because of its social and political links with Greece and Europe, and its role as a bridge with the Roman Empire.

Unfortunately for the Jews, the two first centuries of our era were marked by the emergence of another force that also reached Europe at the same time, namely Christianity. Throughout this period the Romans failed clearly to recognize the ethnic and cultural distinctions between Christians and Jews. One can hardly blame them; it comes as little surprise to find the convert from Judaism Paul of Tarsus visiting many cities in Asia Minor containing Jewish communities during his missionary travels prior to his arrival in Rome. And as Christianity's importance grew, the power of the Jews to influence Roman authorities declined. Throughout this long process the standard marks of Jewish reference and identity remained the same: the *Torah*, and the synagogue. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the same holds true today.

BREAKING UP OLD COMMUNITIES, CONSTRUCTING NEW ONES

Nationalism constituted one major force at the turn of the 19th century, and in many places it led to substantial shifts in social identity. This was especially important in areas where numerous communities had previously co-existed on the basis of criteria such as economic activity and religion. Nationalist ideologues expended much time and energy identifying what the community was, or had been. A good example of this reinterpretation of communities can be found in the Greek debates on the constituent communities that had preceded the modern nation. According to Ioannis Xydopoulos, research on ancient Greek communities received, and in turn helped to construct, a political interpretation relevant to 19th-century ideologies and programmes⁸¹. The creation of a community which could be identified throughout history, the *Hellenes*, required the inclusion of Macedonia and, therefore, an important revision of the narrative of the Greek past.

Iakovos Michailidis has similarly shown how the creation of the Bulgarian empire involved conjuring up previously unknown patterns of differentiation among the Christian inhabitants of the city of Salonica, in the Ottoman empire⁸². During the 18th and 19th centuries, religious identity, which since the 15th century had marked the borders of community within this intensely multi-confessional city, was substituted by new communitarian dynamics constructed on the basis of nationality⁸³. Iwan-Michelangelo D'Aprile has described the parallel process of the integration of the Jewish communities in Prussia. This case involved integrating a community defined by its religious beliefs and practices into the wider forms of identification and membership offered by the new, national understanding of citizenship⁸⁴. Other religious communities faced similar problems of maintaining cohesion within larger frameworks of identity during the same period. Thomas Ruhland has investigated how Moravian communities maintained their cohesion and their collective identity in spite of their migration across the world. The construction of and reflection on an imagined border separating members from the outer world, and the central place of this dichotomy within personal narratives contributed to strengthening this communitarian identity⁸⁵.

Changes in the organization and recognition of communities in the 19th century are partly related to the inherent problems of the concept itself. Real or ideal, community is something of a holy grail. It is constantly sought but never found, for it vanishes out of sight whenever one nears it. But there is one place where it always thrives: in the past. Everyman believes his ancestor lived in a community, whereas he, imprisoned in the present and bereft of its comforting powers, is heir only to the shadow of its memory. Few other socio-cultural constructs in history have been subjected to such a relentless and repetitive discourse of declension. "Community once was, but is no more": one has heard the same complaint in ancient Athens, Imperial Rome, the medieval manor, the enclosing England of Thomas More, the factory towns of emerging industrial society, and the monster of the modern metropolis.

Yet despite its apparently timeless nature, the appeal of and to community has varied in different contexts. 19th-century Europeans were distinctive in their approach to community in at least three respects⁸⁶. First and most visible was the high level of politicization to which they subjected the term. An unusually wide range of social and political movements evoked community as an all-purpose watchword. Radicals on the left as well as the right turned to it in their efforts to mobilize different sectors of the discontented, all of whom looked to community as the negation of a present in which individual interest prevailed over the common good. In this uniquely powerful imagery, community evoked a horizontality that lightened the heavy burden of hierarchical, vertical relations of power, influence, and status. It served to remind persons trapped in an oppressive present that both the past and future could offer alternatives based on solidarity instead of selfishness, and that could lead men and women toward the equality that their own lived experience made a mockery of.

At the same time the 19th century witnessed something of the opposite tendency, the conversion of community into a colder, more analytical category. At first sight the appropriation of this concept by the social sciences meant its removal from the realm of immediate politics. The high point of this transfer was Ferdinand Tönnies's sociological classic *Community and Society*, first published in 1887, and destined to enjoy a large, international readership⁸⁷. In this work the noted German analyst contrasted the tightly-knit, organic hierarchy of the distant past with its anarchic breakdown in the present. In his (implicitly historical) scheme, modernity replaced community with individualism. Yet one wonders to what extent this purposely scientific discourse transcended the consensus of contemporary non-professionals. It is not difficult to conclude that the difference between this sort of science and public opinion involved more tone than substance. Despite his deliberately antiseptic approach, Tönnies's pessimistic reading of contemporary social organization betrayed a considerable overlap with other manifestations of discontent with the rampant individualism that virtually all contemporaries associated with modern capitalism. Still, while Tönnies may well have inherited more than he bequeathed, there is a world of difference between his work and, say, the medievalist bathos of Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl's *Bourgeois Society* of 1854. And it is to such Romantics that one must turn when seeking the intellectual origins of the most tragic experiment in communitarianism of the 20th century, Nazism⁸⁸.

The third distinction of incipient modernity's approach to community was firmly to insert it into one of the oldest dichotomies available, that which pitted the country against the city. As in the case of the sociologicalization of the term, this proved to be not so much an innovation as a return to a pre-existing logic. But there can be no doubting the growing strength of the identification forged between the village, as a 'natural' locus of community, in opposition to the city, whose very existence seemed to preclude such ties. The urban sphere was in turn associated not just with society, but with mass society, where men and women subsisted in crowds and were prey to anxiety, anomie (a

word with a future), and other social ills arising from the diseconomy of scale that was city living. Once again, a high political as well as psychological price was paid for the alleged loss of contact among fellow citizens. Rightist movements in particular mobilized throughout Europe around a vague but evocative ruralism that turned cities into a negative image dominated by the sworn enemies of community: Jews and other rootless cosmopolitans, the industrial proletariat, self-styled modernists and such like⁸⁹.

Much is missing here, to be sure. The 19th-century discourse on community systematically overlooked a number of crucial truths. Tönnies and countless other commentators on urban life failed to note the myriad ways in which communities persisted and were created anew within cities, although a good portion of 20th-century urban sociology and anthropology would try to right this imbalance. Similarly, many of the most influential writers on community were too quick to believe their own idyllic depictions of rural ways of life now threatened by modernization. Here again, however, leading social scientists such as Georg Simmel would later highlight more down-to-earth realities, above all the fact that conflict, not concord, was most effective in strengthening communitarian sentiments.

Finally, Clio too would have her say. A new generation of social historians would, after some hesitation, chip away at the vision of the immobile, organic, and rural past. As Juan Pan-Montojo has argued, “between the end of the 19th century and the Great War, a growing literature reported on and lamented the end of rural communities as they had existed ‘throughout history’”. Agrarian communities were considered to be the “core element” of society, while their inhabitants were respected as “members of a moral world that should act as the reservoir of national values”, even if the formation of agrarian associations was “itself a symptom of the modernization, indeed radical transformation of rural society”⁹⁰. In the present volume, Stephen Jacobson makes similar points regarding the effects of modernization in Catalonia⁹¹. In his view, modernization wound up introducing mobility alongside stability, conflict in the company of solidarity, and individual interest rivalling collective reciprocity. Still, two things cannot be challenged about community in the pre-1914 period: its staying power as a political, cultural, even religious vision, and the way in which a host of historical actors endowed it with an endless capacity for impressively diverse outcomes and blueprints for action.

PERMANENCE OF COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITARIAN TRAITS IN 20TH-CENTURY EUROPE

Most historians and social scientists share the same general view: that despite the heterogeneous meanings of ‘community’, the modern European world, the one that emerged from the construction of national states and the expansion of capitalism and ‘real socialism’, was founded on the weakening and eventually the death of pre-existing communities. Those communities, often called traditional, had all the features social

scientists have tended to associate with the concept. Furthermore, not only communities as social objects underwent a decline, but the discourse of society as a community of communities was replaced by the one of nations made up by individuals or citizens or nationals or families or classes, depending upon the basic understanding of the real or desired components of society.

This common assumption nevertheless must be challenged in three ways. First, it must be challenged from the chronological point of view because the take-off – to use the Rostowian term – of industrialization or of economic modernization did not bring about automatically the end of ‘traditional’ communities anywhere in Europe. Secondly, the replacement of the old communitarian discourse on society by new ones has not entailed the disappearance of all types of communities or at least of the social groups that possessed many of the traits that were associated with communities in the 19th century. Thirdly, the permanence and even the tendency toward hegemony of a liberal discourse that, except in certain specific versions, rejected communities as limits to the personal freedom of the citizens, does not mean that communitarian understandings of society have ceased to exist and have ceased to exercise a large impact on society during the last two centuries.

It is true that parishes and townships continue to exist today but they are not always “districts of inter-personal knowledge”, and even where they are, their neighbours tend to be less homogenous, keep less dense relations, and sustain a more stable exchange of communication and information with outsiders, than their ancestors most likely did⁹². We should all the same not be mesmerized by idealized pictures of a bygone countryside. For example, peasants in most European societies travelled further and more often than is commonly assumed. And they were by no means only agriculturalists; rather, they indulged in a complex range of activities.

It is also true that the phenomena observed by many authors who proclaimed the death of the rural communities at the end of the 19th century – to the point of constituting the starting points of some of the most popular dichotomies of social sciences, including community vs. society; mechanical vs. organic solidarity; traditional vs. modern⁹³ – were often accurately described. But the various sorts of changes in rural communities, and even those that resulted in their radical transformation (such as the purges of kulaks and the forced collectivization of land in the USSR in the 1930s, or the rural exodus that emptied whole mountain areas, or the integration of villages in cities or their growth into tourist centres or industrial towns), have not led to the weakening, much less the disappearance of all rural communities⁹⁴.

The reproduction, albeit not the static reproduction, of rural communities well into the 20th century went hand in hand with the urban experience. Mining valleys, streets, *quartiers*, urban religious communities, industrial townships: these and many other new communities managed to retain their identity at least until the industrial crisis of the 1970s. Some of them are even still around today. If some observers have pointed out

that physical mobility, thanks to rising incomes that have enabled access to cars and to tourism, and the parallel globalization of cultural patterns, have put an end to ancient, closed, rural communities – assuming again that the ‘traditional’ communities were much more closed to outside influence than they actually were – it is not less true that all European cities have seen in the last decades the creation of new closely-knit ethnic communities, which have managed to reproduce in an alien environment some of the traits of the rural or urban communities they came from, in pretty much the same way industrial labourers created their own communities in the mining areas of Wales, the mills of Lancashire, the industrial towns of Biscay, the new urban neighborhoods of Milan, or the Ruhr factory belt. In any case, when can we state that a community is over and done with? With what can we compare any small and territorialized social group and its internal relations, to proclaim that it can no longer be understood as a community?

The second challenge comes from the expansion of the other kind of communities we have referred to in the introduction to this chapter: virtual communities that do not entail face to face relations; communities put between inverted comas by those who call them so, because they do not possess most or even a part of the features that could be assigned to any community: textual communities, professional communities, and so on. The attractiveness of the term has even led to its being applied to a huge supranational institution, the European Community, which lacks any of the elements one could possibly attribute to a community. But beyond this type of symbolic community, new forms of territorial or quasi-territorial communities have appeared in Europe in the last two centuries. Apart from those which were born out of the reshaping of old ones that we have mentioned, there are other ones as well, from urban tribes to new religious groups and sects. All these new communitarian forms are a minority phenomenon in Europe, and most of them build partial relations as against the theoretically integral relationship embedded in a community. But they have their territories, they build identities, they function thanks to reciprocal exchanges, they promote face-to-face relations, and they enforce upon their members informal rules of behaviour.

In the third place while liberal doctrine represented society (as defined by national states) as an aggregate of citizens, most liberals did not ignore or undervalue local communities. At the same time a powerful, anti-liberal organic discourse challenged the new political representations⁹⁵. Eventually, in the early 20th century, a new liberalism added its voice to that of conservatives calling for the re-discovery of communitarian approaches to society⁹⁶. Furthermore, different types of corporatism – recognising the existence and the need to preserve different bodies within society – developed as an alternative to liberal policies. In so doing they acquired a diffuse, but nonetheless broad role in the European democracies⁹⁷. In the past few decades corporatism, as an alternative to liberal individualism, has been replaced by other ‘isms’. Recent developments in political theory such as communitarianism and multiculturalism have introduced the question of community and its relationships into political entities no longer

perceived as comprising a unique community. According to such views communities already exist within (for instance) nation-states, and should be identified as such in order to be respected and protected⁹⁸. Zygmunt Bauman has investigated this 'return' to communitarian views of the social world. According to him "community is nowadays another term for paradise lost – but one to which we dearly hope to return"⁹⁹. According to his view "once undone, a community cannot be recomposed. If it rises again it will not take the form preserved in the memory"¹⁰⁰. With this perspective Bauman has stressed the differences between the community we dream of and the community which actually exists, which is supposed to incarnate the earlier image but demands unconditional loyalty and severely judges all traitors¹⁰¹.

There is no gainsaying the endless and very real problems the concept of community poses. When can we call something a community? And inversely, when can we say that a community has been damaged or has disappeared? Despite these deep uncertainties, historians – let alone sociologists or anthropologists – use this term so full of polysemy and loaded with values, because they feel that it is a concept with many connotations for which there is no adequate substitute. Perhaps the solution to this paradox lies in the acceptance, with Arnaldo Bagnasco, that community, either as a polar model in the sense given to it by Tönnies, or as an ideal type, as Weber defined it, is not a very useful concept with which to analyze modern European societies and that we should use instead instrumental concepts related to community such as identity, reciprocity, or trust¹⁰². These 'traces of community' have not only survived the weakening – rather than the disappearance – of adscriptive closed groups (and even the outlawing in many European countries of those religious communities that are termed 'sects'). Rather, they are permanent elements of society. Permanent does not mean, however, either static or linear. Thus we can look through them to espy actual changes in social relations at different levels. Which is to say, we can historicize them.

CONCLUSIONS

'Community' rests uneasily within the multi-levelled structure agreed for the present volume. At first glance, there is a sense in which community can be easily identified as a reality operating between a familial and a regional or state level. Some basic characteristics help to define and identify this communitarian scale of human organization. The chronological overview presented here has made clear the different weight of these communitarian structures over time. However, even if we have advocated here a precise and local approach to community, a sense remains that the concept can be both very small and all-encompassing at the same time. Communities are "sets of social relations without any precise borders"¹⁰³, and this is true not only in the opposition of "local communities" to "imagined or supra-territorial" ones, but also because of the shifting and dynamic nature of all historical communities. Community is at the same time a conceptual tool with which to delineate limits which cannot really be 'seen'. It operates at different

'levels' of reality as perceived by those who are its members. 'Community' is in the end a reflexive effort to define what a community is, and the different historical forms which it has adopted play an important role in any attempt to describe past societies.

Some of the lines along which this chapter has developed suggest the possibility of a history of the spaces in which humans conduct their daily activities. A progression from local to global perceptions of space would doubtless prove to be an interesting research topic for historians. The growth of the 'known' world – 'known' here meaning interacting with, or otherwise influencing the lives of groups or individuals – has obvious effects for conceiving social structure and the forms of interrelation between human beings. It is not only that space has received much less attention than time in historical research. It is also that historical narratives normally refer to just one of these levels and do not consider the implications of the other. In part this is due to a degree of provincialism on the part of certain Euro-American histories, which tend to identify their subject with the whole epoch under assessment¹⁰⁴. It is possible that broad overviews and collaborative enterprises such as the one presented here can help to avoid some of these dangers.

The collaborative nature of this chapter delineates some possibilities for uniting and comparing different academic traditions and areas of expertise. The structure of our network and the diverse backgrounds of its members do not make for a unified, smooth historical narrative. Instead, our collective endeavor starkly exposes the limitations of scope, simplified assumptions, and unresolved problems of the narratives produced within smaller and more tightly knit groups of historians. We hope that this drawback will redound to the reader's benefit. For what is sometimes lost in cohesiveness is regained in the form of a broader and above all more critical response to the past.

NOTES

- ¹ J. Pan-Montojo, F. Pedersen (eds.), *Communities in European History. Representations, Jurisdictions, Conflicts*, Pisa 2008, p. ix; M.D. Christopoulos, *Greek Communities Abroad: Organization and Integration. A Case Study of Trieste*, in Pan-Montojo, Pedersen (eds.), *Communities* cit., p. 23.
- ² I. Xydopoulos, *The Concept and Representation of Northern Communities in Ancient Greek Historiography: the Case of Thucydides*, in Pan-Montojo, Pedersen (eds.), *Communities* cit., p. 2.
- ³ A. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, cited in Xydopoulos, *Concept* cit., p. 2.
- ⁴ F. Peyrou, *Federalism as an "Imagined Community": Nineteenth-Century Spanish Republicanism and Democracy*, in Pan-Montojo, Pedersen (eds.), *Communities* cit., p. 86.
- ⁵ M.J. Halvorson, K.E. Spierling (eds.), *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*, Aldershot 2008, p. 2, which offers a broad definition of community as "a group of people who perceived themselves as having common interests and, thus, a common identity or self-understanding".
- ⁶ W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy. An Introduction*, Oxford 2002, p. 208.
- ⁷ D. Sabeau, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany*, Cambridge 2008, p. 29.
- ⁸ The following discussion of the communes is based on: J. Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga I*, Reykjavik 1956, pp. 103-109; L. Björnsson, *Saga sveitarstjórnar á Íslandi I*, Reykjavik 1972, pp. 9-54; F. Pedersen,

- A Medieval Welfare State? Welfare Provision in a Twelfth Century Icelandic Law Code*, in "Northern Studies", 1999, 34, pp. 89-111.
- ⁹ J. Jóhannesson, M. Finnbogason, K. Eldjárn (eds.), *Sturlunga saga I*, Reykjavik 1946, pp. 27, 66, 130.
- ¹⁰ H. Matthíasson, *Landnám milli Þjórsár og Hvítár*, in "Skirnir", 1950, 124, pp. 113-151; Id., *Landið og landnáma I-II*, Reykjavik 1982.
- ¹¹ Björnsson, *Saga* cit., pp. 89-92.
- ¹² M.W. Stein-Wilkeshuis, *Common Land Tenure in Medieval Iceland*, in "Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin", 1987, 44, pp. 575-585; W.I. Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking. Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland*, Chicago 1990, p. 19.
- ¹³ *Diplomatarium Islandicum. Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn*, vol. I, ed. Jón Sigurðsson, Copenhagen 1857, nr. 137 [c. 1245].
- ¹⁴ *Grágás. Efter det Arnarnagæanske haandskrift, nr. 334 fol., Staðarbólsbók*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, Copenhagen 1879, p. 259.
- ¹⁵ Jóhannesson, Finnbogason, Eldjárn (eds.), *Sturlunga saga I* cit., p. 72.
- ¹⁶ B. Þorsteinsson, S. Líndal, *Lögfesting konungsvalds*, in S. Líndal (ed.), *Saga Íslands III*, Reykjavik 1978, pp. 41-51.
- ¹⁷ W.D.H. Sellar, *The Earliest Campbells: Normans, Britons or Gael?*, in "Scottish Studies", 1973, 17, pp. 109-124.
- ¹⁸ A.I. Macinnes, *Clanship: a Historical Perspective*, in G.Way of Pleas (ed.), *Scottish Clan and Family Encyclopedia*, Glasgow 1994, pp. 13-20.
- ¹⁹ D. Stevenson, *Alasdair MacColla and the Highland Problem in the Seventeenth Century*, Edinburgh 1980, pp. 6-33; J. Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland*, Oxford 1999, pp. 254-285; J. Goodare, M. Lynch, *The Scottish state and its borderlands, 1567-1625*, and M. Lynch, *James VI and the Highland Problem*, in M. Lynch, J. Goodare, *The Reign of James VI*, East Linton 1999, pp. 186-227.
- ²⁰ R. Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Islands, c.1493-1820*, Edinburgh 1998, pp. 84-111.
- ²¹ J.E.A. Dawson, *Two Kingdoms or Three?: Ireland in Anglo-Scottish Relations in the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, in R.A. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England 1286-1815*, Edinburgh 1987, pp. 113-138; G.A. Hayes-McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland*, Dublin - London 1937, pp. 12-13, 37-40, 57-58, 61.
- ²² The traditional basis of clanship and its association with disorder are covered comprehensively in A.I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788*, East Linton 1996, pp. 1-55.
- ²³ A. Cathcart, *Kinship and Clientage: Highland Clanship 1451-1609*, Leiden 2006, pp. 159-209; A. Campbell of Airds, *A History of Clan Campbell*, Edinburgh 2000-2004, vol. I, pp. 70-90.
- ²⁴ K.W. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages*, Dublin 1972, pp. 21-44, 57-65.
- ²⁵ A.A.M. Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom*, Edinburgh 1978, pp. 114-115; K. Simms, *From Kings to Warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later Middle Ages*, Woodbridge 1987.
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