Marriage and the family in Eurasia.
Perspectives on the Hajnal hypothesis
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Life at the Extremes: The demography of China and Europe
General introduction
Chuang Ying-chang, Theo Engelen & Arthur P. Wolf
This is the first volume of a projected series of volumes aimed at comparing the demographic regimes of two parts of Europe and China in late traditional times. This volume sets the theoretical stage by examining in detail John Hajnal’s grand comparison of marriage in Europe and “the rest of the world”.¹ The volume is intended to introduce our efforts as the latest generation of research in the intellectual lineage founded by Thomas Malthus and developed by John Hajnal, E.A. Wrigley, and the less well-known Dutch sociologist E.W. Hofstee.² We also acknowledge as our intellectual forebears two Chinese authors – Hung Liang-chi and Ma Yin-chu. In his essays “Reign of Peace” and “Livelihood” Hung anticipated many of Malthus’ ideas and Ma brought them to bear on Chinese population thinking at a critical point in history.³

Our plan is to move from the general questions discussed in this volume to detailed empirical studies in volumes two, three, and four. Volume two will deal with fertility, volume three with marriage, and volume four with mortality. Additional volumes will deal with household structure, the life cycle, sibling position as a determinant of life courses, and inheritance customs and their influence on demographic processes. We also hope to include in the series translations of important Dutch and Chinese sources and to reprint significant works that are neglected because of where and when they were originally published.

We entitle the series “Life at the Extremes” for three reasons. The first is that we plan to compare populations that lived at the opposite ends of Eurasia and consequently developed radically different social forms; the second is that we plan to deal with the life course from birth to death and to include in our comparisons people at both ends of the social ladder; and the third is that in terms of the behaviors that define demography, China and Europe represented

two radically different adaptations. One was characterized by early and universal
marriage, high general fertility, low marital fertility, and high mortality; the
other, by late marriage and a high celibacy rate, low general fertility, high mari-
tal fertility, and, compared with most pre-modern populations, low mortality.4
One of our major goals will be to assess whether or not these two demographic
regimes are best characterized as examples of what Thomas Malthus called “pre-
ventive” and “positive” checks.

The populations we compare are people born in the Netherlands in the
years 1780-1870 and in Taiwan in the years 1860-1925. We choose these partic-
ular populations because a large portion of their lives was recorded in detail in
household registers established in the Netherlands in 1850 and in Taiwan in
1905.5 These registers record information that is accurate, detailed, and highly
comparable. They are two of the best sources of individual demographic infor-
mation in the world. They report not only the dates that mark the progress of the
typical life course – birth, marriage, the births of children, and death – but also
the dates of events that mark departures from the typical life course – adoption,
divorce, and remarriage. They record who people married as well as when they
married and who they were living with as well as where they were living. It is
possible to determine for all events that occurred during the years covered by the
registers the exact composition of the household in which the subject of the
event was living. One can therefore evaluate the extent to which the vital events
in people's lives were influenced by events in the lives of their parents and sib-
lings. The hallmark of the work published in this series will be studies that begin
with individuals in particular contexts and build from there to comparisons of
the populations of two very different societies.

From an anthropological point of view, Taiwan and the Netherlands were
radically different societies. Taiwan was part of the world’s most enduring tribu-
tary state and exemplified in extreme form many of the characteristics of such
states – a strictly patrilineal kinship system, an oppressive gender hierarchy, and
generational relations that gave parents the ability to control their married as
well as their unmarried children. The Netherlands, in contrast, was a parlia-
mentary monarchy with a cognatic kinship system, relatively egalitarian gender
relations, and generational relations that made it difficult for parents to arrange

4. See Michael W. Flinn, The European Demographic System, 1500-1820 (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins
(Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995) for China.
5. The Dutch registers are described in A. Janssens, Family and Social change: the household as a process in an
industrializing society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and the Taiwanese registers in Arthur
P. Wolf and Chieh-shan Huang, Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford
University Press, 1980), 16-33.
their children’s marriages, let alone dictate the course of their adult lives. There were, however, ways in which the two societies were more alike than is commonly realized. These are important because they provide the common ground that allows us to identify the cause and consequences of the major differences. In the language of the laboratory, they are the experimental constants.

One of these is the fact that during the years covered by our study, fertility in both societies conformed to the pattern Louis Henry calls “natural fertility”. There was no birth control and no general desire for birth control. In fact, the cultures of both countries can be characterized as strongly pro-natalist until well after the youngest of our subjects were born. According to the standard set by the Princeton Fertility Project, the Dutch fertility transition began in 1899 and the Taiwanese fertility transition in the 1960s. Thus in both cases the births of our youngest subjects preceeded the beginning of the fertility transition by several decades.

A second common feature of the two societies during the years that concern us is their mixed economies. Despite the fact that the Netherlands is generally viewed as “the first modern economy”, the great majority of the population depended on agriculture until well into the 20th century. In 1850 when the last of our subjects was born 40 percent of all Dutch families were farmers, in rural areas more than 50 percent. What is less well known is that while an even larger number of all Taiwanese were also farmers, a very large proportion of them were producing for the world market. After what Robert Gardella calls “the second tea revolution” the income of farmers throughout Northern Taiwan depended on the tastes of Europeans and Americans and prices in the London and New York markets.

The third and perhaps most important resemblance is the fact that in both societies the years that interest us were transitional years. In the Netherlands railways replaced traditional means of transportion in the 1870s; modern public health measures were implemented in the same years; there was substantial movement from agriculture to industrial employment from the 1860s on; and mass education was introduced in the early 1890s. In Taiwan these changes were initiated by the Japanese colonial government in the first quarter of the 20th century. The north-south rail line was completed in 1901; plague, cholera, and malaria were controlled with the result that mortality fell


sharply after 1905;\(^8\) young people initiated a general movement from agriculture to industry in the 1920s;\(^9\) and by 1940 53.2 percent of all school-aged children were enrolled in an elementary school.\(^10\) Thus in both societies most of our older subjects lived to see these changes, and most of our younger subjects lived to be benefitted by them.

We do not claim that the Netherlands are representative of Europe or that Taiwan is representative of China. We are well aware that what Hajnal called “the European marriage pattern” faded as one moved south of the Alps,\(^11\) and that the multiplicity of major forms found in many parts of South China was not found anywhere in the North.\(^12\) What we do claim is that something very like the differences we find in comparing Taiwan and the Netherlands would appear if we were able to compare Switzerland and Szechuan or Scotland and Shansi. The differences between the Chinese and European demographic regimes were so great that the differences within the two regions do not disqualify comparisons based on their parts. One would no more mistake the demographic profile of a European country for that of a Chinese province than one would mistake the steeple of a European church for the roof of a Chinese temple.

The research reported in this series was stimulated by questions about the many differences between the European and Chinese demographic regimes – questions of the kind that Malthus raised but did not answer. Why was the marriage pattern of most of Europe “unique or almost unique in the world”?\(^13\) Why did so many Europeans fail to marry? What were the demographic consequences of early and nearly universal marriage in China? What were the economic and social consequences? And etc. However, we do not intend to focus exclusively on questions about the many differences between Europe and China. We are also intent on discovering similarities. The fact that European women bore children at a much faster pace than Taiwanese women is a difference that may reveal a fundamental similarity. It may be that in both societies the pace of child bearing was conditioned by the nutritional status of would-be mothers. Dutch women may have preferred a slower pace than they were allowed, and Chinese women may have preferred a faster pace than they could afford.


\(^9\) Barclay, *Colonial Development*, 84-98.


\(^12\) Wolf and Huang, *Marriage and Adoption in China*, 326-339.

The project responsible for the work reported in this series was founded in Taipei in January, 1996, at a meeting of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. It was there that we met and formulated the plan leading to the work reported in this series. It was a plan that has had to be revised again and again to solve the problems that inevitably attend an undertaking of this magnitude. That it has survived and is now thriving is due in no small part to the support provided by our home institutions – the Academia Sinica, the Radboud University Nijmegen, and Stanford University – and generous financial assistance provided by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, the N.W. Posthumus Institute, the National Science Council in Taiwan, and the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research. We take this occasion to thank them.

The project members include scholars from three countries and thirteen academic institutions. They are: Melissa Brown (Stanford University), Chuang Ying-chang (Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan), Theo Engelen (Radboud University Nijmegen), Hill Gates (Stanford University), Hsieh Ying-hui (Historial Demography Program, Academia Sinica, Taiwan), Paul Katz (Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taiwan), Paul Klep (Radboud University Nijmegen), Jan Kok (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam), Pan Ying-hai (Institute of Ethnology, Academic Sinica, Taiwan), Richard Papeng (University of Groningen), John Shepherd (University of Virginia), Frans van Poppel (Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, Den Haag), Ad van der Woude (University of Wageningen), Sping Wang (University of Toronto), James Wilkerson (Tsing Hua University), Arthur P. Wolf (Stanford University), Yang Wen-shan (Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan).
Introduction:
Marriage and the family in Eurasia
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It is said that generals are always planning for the last war. So also it may be said that conference convenors are always planning for the last conference. They remember the issues that divided the participants, how they marshalled their forces, the tactics they employed in making their cases, and the questions that remained unanswered at the end of the day. They remember all of this and plan accordingly. But when the conference convenes and the papers are read they discover that there are new issues, new alignments, new tactics, and, again, at the end of the day, unanswered questions. The result is that when they come to writing an introduction to the conference papers they are faced with a task different than the one they had anticipated.

We are not exceptions to the rule. We anticipated writing an introduction that would be a definitive assessment of the ideas John Hajnal proposed in his 1965 paper entitled “The European marriage patterns in perspective” and his 1982 paper entitled “Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system”.¹ What we face instead is the far more difficult task of introducing readers to papers that realign the forces in the field by introducing new issues and rewrite the rules of engagement by revising and even extending Hajnal’s hypotheses. We failed to understand that conferences, like battles, evolve. This is, we now see, what makes one interesting and the other dangerous.

Our strategy in addressing the task we face is to treat the papers as the elements of partially overlapping clusters each of which raises an issue or exemplifies a perspective. We hope in this way to show how the papers relate to one another and to direct the reader’s attention to implicit as well as explicit issues. We need, however, to begin by dealing with two definitional/terminological confusions that have already caused considerable trouble and that are certain to cause more if they are not clarified.

In anthropological discourse “elementary” (or “nuclear”) says that a family contains only one married pair; “stem” says that it contains at least two married pairs but not more than one pair in one generation; and “joint” says that it includes two or more pairs at least two of which are in the same generation. Thus when, in his 1982 essay, Hajnal introduces his discussion of “household formation rules” by declaring that “by a joint household we mean a household comprising two or more related married couples” he seems to be saying that in his usage the term joint includes stem families.² This is reinforced by his list of what he calls “formation rules common to joint households”. The second rule (2b) says that “a young married couple often start life together either in a house-

hold of which an older couple is and remains in charge or in a household of which an unmarried older person continues to be head.”

Obviously, this rule does not exclude what are commonly called “stem families”. Indeed, it seems to be written to make sure they are included. But is this what Hajnal intends? On the next page he explains that

the Northwest European rule 1b, that a married couple were in charge of their own household, implies that upon marriage, either (a) a new household was created, or (b) one spouse joined the other in a household in which there had been no married couple, or (c) if they took over a farm run by their parents or a parent of one of them, the parent or parents retired when the young people married.

This clearly says that as long as the parents retire when their heir marries, stem families are to be grouped with elementary families rather than with joint families. Hajnal then adds a footnote that affirms this interpretation and rewrites rule 2b to exclude stem families from his joint category.

The custom whereby one son remains at home and takes over the farm when his father retires has often been regarded as the essential characteristic of the “stem family”. In some parts of Northwest Europe such “stem families” were numerous. On the other hand, the kind of “stem family” arrangement in which one son remains at home and marries while his father continues as head of the household after the son’s marriage did not occur in Northwest Europe. It is incompatible with rule b. No kind of stem family system can be classified as a joint household system in our sense. In a stem family only one heir remains in the parental household after marriage. Under a joint system all sons normally bring their brides into the household by rule 2b.

This clearly contradicts both Hajnal’s definition of “joint” and the sense of rule 2b as first stated. But it is clear what he means. “Simple” is not equivalent to “elementary” or “nuclear”. It includes one class of stem families (what Wally Seccombe calls “weak-stem families”) and thus a large proportion of what European scholars commonly refer to as “complex households”. Hajnal’s “joint”, in contrast, is equivalent to the anthropologists’ “joint”. It includes only those household systems that allow for two or more married couples in one generation. One class of stem families – those in which the parents retain the headship after their

3. Hajnal, “Two kinds of preindustrial household formation system”, 452.
heir marries (Seccombe’s “strong-stem families”) – are neither “simple” nor “joint”. Hajnal admits that “there are household formation systems besides those considered here” and suggests that this may be one of them. We will have something to say about such systems when we get to Japan.

The term “simple family system” presents no problems as long as we remember that it includes some stem families as well as elementary families, but the term “joint family systems” is problematic. Maurice Freedman put it well when he noted, with reference to the Chinese family, that the word “joint” “leads on from questions of morphology to the nature of the rights and duties entailed in the estates which all but the poorest families have in some form.”

In one sense “joint” says that a family is made up of three or more generations, the intermediate of which (or at least one of them) comprising more than one married pair; in another sense it says that that the family is an economic unit, owning an estate which is the property of all the male members jointly. But in the latter sense a “stem” family is also joint, for the father and son and son’s son in it are not less coparceners than are the men in a “joint” family, and mutatis mutandis with an “elementary” family.

Freedman thought it important to match the terms “elementary” and “stem” with some more “suitable term of morphology” and recommended the term “grand”. We like his recommendation and are going to take it upon ourselves to drop the term “joint household system” in favor of the term “grand household system”. One reason is that it avoids the ambiguity Freedman noted; another is that it pairs nicely with the term “simple”; and yet another is that it comes out of the literature concerning the Chinese family. This makes it appropriate because Hajnal takes China as the prototypical example of his non-European system. At its starkest the contrast he draws is a contrast between Northwest Europe and China.

First cluster
The first papers we consider are those by Theo Engelen and Georg Fertig. They make a natural cluster because both relate Hajnal’s ideas to the intellectual milieus in which they were developed, but there is a less obvious reason for treating them together. Unintentionally, they raise new issues by taking radically different views of what is meant – and what should be meant – by the phrase “the Hajnal hypothesis”. For Engelen, the Hajnal hypothesis is a general demographic theory, comparable in scope to demographic transition theory. From Engelen’s perspective, it is easy to see what E.A. Wrigley meant when he noted that “the

7. Seccombe, A Millenium of Family Change, 42.
most significant feature of Hajnal’s [1965] article (...) was simply that he placed marriage once again at the center of the stage.” For Wrigley, as for Engelen, the Hajnal hypothesis treats marriage as the principal agent by which economic change and population growth are related. It is a hypothesis that is probably best attributed to Thomas Malthus and that was later also developed by the Dutch demographer, E.W. Hofstee. Hofstee argued that in the 18th century Dutch fertility was regulated by a system “in which marriage was only possible if and when one had acquired a livelihood adequate to one’s occupation and social status” (p. 11).

In 1965 Hajnal suggested that “in Europe it has been necessary for a man to defer marriage until he could establish an independent livelihood adequate to support a family”, and he admitted he was tempted “to see in this the key to the uniqueness of the European marriage pattern.” Fertig recognizes this, but argues that Hajnal never yielded to the temptation. To the contrary, Hajnal immediately went on to admit that “it is not at all clear a priori how a rule that a man must have a livelihood before marrying would operate to produce just such a postponement as is in fact observed.”

Even if we understood how the age of marriage of men was determined at a given period it would still need to be explained how women’s age at marriage was effected. The uniqueness of the European marriage pattern lies primarily in the high age at marriage of women, rather than a high age at marriage for men.

Thus, for Fertig, in contrast to Engelen, the Hajnal hypothesis is simply the claim that “Europeans have married much later than others and more have remained unmarried throughout life”. It says nothing “about the conditions that give rise to this pattern”, let alone its consequences for the relationship between economic change and population growth. Hajnal’s “genuine contribution” was simply to show that as regards age at marriage and celibacy, Europe was “distinctive”. In Fertig’s view, the rest of what is commonly labeled “the Hajnal hypothesis” – particularly the idea that in Europe marriage required a livelihood – “is not derived from empirical work such as Hajnal’s but rather from early modern normative discussions, and from the deep conflicts between social and national groups that have shaped European societies – especially in Central Europe – during the 19th and 20th centuries” (p. 26).

The source of this disagreement is not obvious, but it can be located. Engelen is thinking about what the label “the Hajnal hypothesis” means in the literature inspired by Hajnal’s papers; Fertig is thinking about what the label should mean given what Hajnal said in the concluding paragraphs of his 1965 paper. Thus, there is no issue to be debated, but there is a crying need for clarification. We suggest that if one takes account of all that has been written, there are in fact three Hajnal hypotheses that form a kind of conceptual pyramid. At the bottom is the Hajnal hypothesis in the restricted sense preferred by Fertig. It is simply the ethnographic claim that as regards marriage, household structure, and life-cycle service, Europe is “unique or almost unique in the world”. At the second level of the pyramid is what Fertig, among others, calls “the niche hypothesis”. It is the claim that what made Europe “unique or almost unique” was the requirement that a man have an independent livelihood before marrying. And at the third level is “the Hajnal hypothesis” in the broad sense, preferred by Engelen. We will call it “the equilibrium hypothesis”. It is the claim that in Europe nuptiality functioned as a kind of social thermostat that regulated the relationship between economic wellbeing and population growth.

We suggest thinking of three hypotheses as forming a pyramid because the soundness of the upper levels assumes the soundness of the lower levels but not vice versa. So long as they are interpreted as statements about Europe, the niche hypothesis and the equilibrium hypothesis depend on the validity of the ethnographic hypothesis. And because the equilibrium hypothesis links marriage and the availability of livelihoods, it depends on the validity of the niche hypothesis. But the niche hypothesis does not depend on the validity of the equilibrium hypothesis. And the ethnographic hypothesis does not depend on the validity of either the niche hypothesis or the equilibrium hypothesis. One could topple the entire structure by demolishing the ethnographic hypothesis but not by demolishing the niche hypothesis or the equilibrium hypothesis.

**Second cluster**

The second cluster we identify includes the papers by François Hendrickx, François Hendrickx and Hill Gates, Andrejs Plakans and Charles Wetherell, and Pier Paolo Viazzo. They all address the ethnographic questions at the bottom of the Hajnal pyramid: Is there a distinctive European marriage/household system? Is it what Hajnal calls a simple household system? Does it include late marriage, a high celibacy rate, single couple households, and service as a phase in the typical life cycle? Hendrickx’s answers with regard to Northwestern Europe – England, Ireland, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Northern France – are all, with only minor qualifications, affirmative. In all of these countries the “national average of age at first marriages was over 25 for men and over 23 for women”; permanent celibacy rates varied considerably from country
to country but were everywhere higher than in “the rest of the world”; life cycle service also varied greatly but “on average 50 to 60 percent of all youths aged 15 to 25 years were in service”; and although “complex” households were found in many regions, they were still “simple” by the standards Hajnal set in his 1982 paper. Grand families and strong stem families were not found anywhere in Northwestern Europe. In this one region of the world all married couples were their own masters.

In their paper focusing on Hajnal’s ethnographic claims with regard to life cycle service, Hendrickx and Gates suggest that “it is helpful to think in terms of a triad of life-cycle labor types: apprentices, domestic servants (who were typically urban), and production servants (who in general were rural).” “Only the last of these”, they suggest, “is usually implied by the term “life-cycle service” as it has been defined by Laslett and Hajnal.” This said, they agree that Hajnal was right in claiming that servants were “a substantial component of rural pre-industrial Northwestern European households” and that life-cycle service was “uniquely European”.14 Like other components of the Hajnal complex, the system faded towards the south and the east. Even then, however, it remained distinctive when compared with the situation in China at the opposite end of the continent. “Life-cycle service in a strict Northwest European sense was clearly not present in rural China.” The author’s most interesting qualification is that in certain respects Japan resembles Europe. “Northwest Europe and China”, they suggest, “represent extremes on a spectrum of possibilities, with Japan closer to the Netherlands, and Austria to China than we might have anticipated.”

Plakans and Wetherell’s answers to the questions posed by the ethnographic hypothesis are also affirmative but with far more serious qualifications. For them, the question is: Where is the boundary between Western and Eastern Europe? Is it a line extending southward from St. Petersburg to Trieste, as Hajnal suggested in 1965? Although the European Fertility Project thought its measure of nuptiality “nicely confirmed” the location of Hajnal’s line,15 Plakans and Wetherell are not so sure. They agree that there is “little in the post-1983 research results about the territories under and around the Hajnal line that speaks overwhelmingly against the line as drawn” (p. 8), but they insist that the line holds “only as long as we are willing to remain at the same level of generalization as Hajnal used” (p. 8). They argue that when it is disaggregated in a way that takes account of the cultural diversity so characteristic of the area, the Euro-

pean Fertility Project’s data shows that north/south variation is as marked in the Hajnal borderlands as east/west variation.

Plakans and Wetherell also argue that Hajnal’s contrast between simple and grand household systems breaks down when faced with “the evidence from the Russian Baltic provinces at the mid-nineteenth century”. This evidence shows that estate-based agriculture there created a two-tiered peasant society with “two distinct familial patterns” (p. 8). The majority of the population were “landless peasants who moved from farm to farm, as single men and women or in small conjugal units” (p. 24). They “never developed complex familial households.” The privileged minority, in contrast, the farmstead’s heads and their families, lived in households “in which the tendency to develop complexity was very strong” (p. 8). We will address the questions raised by this seeming anomaly later in discussing the significance of grand families among French and Italian sharecroppers.

In the fourth paper in our second cluster Pier Paolo Viazzo undertakes the difficult task of evaluating the evidence from Southern Europe. In 1965 Hajnal recognized that “significant departures from the European pattern may be found not only as one proceeds eastward but on the southern edge of Europe as well”, and in 1982 he admitted that the northwestern European household formation system might “have to be modified when Southern European systems have been thoroughly studied.” Thus, for Viazzo, the question is: Was Hajnal right about being wrong? His reluctant conclusion is that he was. The Hajnal hypotheses have been refuted “rule by rule”.

Two decades of industrious research have demonstrated that the map of the southern European household formation systems was far more varied and chequered than had been previously assumed and that the functional relationships linking marriage age, post-marital residence and life-cycle service, if they existed at all, were much less rigid than Hajnal had postulated (p.31).

Although Viazzo’s careful evaluation of the evidence leaves no doubt that in the social landscape of Southern Europe grew more varieties of family life than in its northern neighbor, we are reluctant to dismiss it from Hajnal’s European community or to dismember the community. Our reason is that the judgments of critics like David Kertzer – who sees Italy as “the burial ground for many of the most ambitious and well-known theories of household and marriage systems” – are based on mistaken criteria. Hajnal’s ethnographic hypothesis implies the

17. Hajnal, “Two kinds of preindustrial household formation system”, 476.
existence of one or more powerful variables operating to produce simple household systems in Europe and grand household systems elsewhere, but it does not imply that these are the only variables capable of shaping household systems. When Hajnal recognizes the possibility of “departures” in Southern Europe and “wide variation” elsewhere,\textsuperscript{19} he is allowing for the very likely possibility that local conditions may countermand the forces that produce the European/non-European contrast. If these conditions are common in a region, as appears to have been the case in southern Europe, their effects may make it difficult to identify the basic household system, but this does not mean that it does not exist or that it cannot be identified.

The clearest example in the literature is found in David Kertzer and Dennis Hogan’s study of sharecroppers in central Italy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.\textsuperscript{20} Their households were typically grand households, larger and even more complex than those of Chinese peasants. But this does not mean that the household system of Central Italy was a grand system or that it was a system unique to this one region of the world. Sharecroppers constituted only about a third of the population and lived under very special constraints. They were forced by contract to maintain households with two or three married couples. If they failed to do so, they lost their land and thus their livelihood. Among their neighbors who were not subject to these constraints – agricultural laborers, craftsmen, and shopkeepers – family life conformed to the rules of Hajnal’s simple system. Kertzer interprets the fact that sharecroppers married relatively late, as evidence that Hajnal was wrong in linking grand households and early marriage. It is better interpreted as evidence that the household system of Italian sharecroppers was a mutant version of a simple household system.

The same point can be made with respect to the grand families found among French sharecroppers in the Nivernais and among farmstead heads on estates in the Russian Baltic.\textsuperscript{21} In both cases grand families were only found in one social stratum and under legal conditions that specifically required multi-couple households. Single couple households were the rule among all other strata, and age at marriage conformed to the European pattern. Proto-industrialization also created exceptions to the simple household system by lowering age at marriage below Hajnal’s standard in some localities, but again these exceptions do not overthrow the ethnographic hypothesis. So long as they are limited to a socially distinct minority subject to special conditions, exceptions do not chal-

\textsuperscript{19} Hajnal, “European marriage patterns in perspective”.


lenge Hajnal’s system. They only indicate that the forces behind the system were not absolutely dominant. As Hill Gates puts it this volume, “pi [proto-industrialization] created European anomalies, not European norms.”

Third cluster
Our third cluster are those papers written by East Asian specialists – Chuang Ying-chang, Osamu Saito, Hill Gates, and Arthur Wolf. Although they disagree with one another on a number of issues, they agree on one important point. They do not doubt that Hajnal was right in contrasting Europe with “the rest of the world”. This is not surprising in the case of Chuang, Gates, and Wolf, all three of whom are sinologists. Judged by any one of Hajnal’s variables, China is at the opposite extreme from Europe. More surprising is Saito’s insistence that Japan was also fundamentally different. He recognizes that “the same term has often been used to describe family forms observed in areas of Europe and in Japan”, but insists that “the Japanese family system was not a stem family system of the north-central European type” (p. 3). There was a critical difference in the way in which “retirement was arranged (...) and when control over production and the family economy was relinquished to the younger generation”.

Thus it seems that acceptance of Hajnal’s hypothesis depends very much on the judge’s perspective. Those who view Europe from within or from its frontiers are more likely to reject the hypothesis than those who view Europe from the opposite end of the continent. Is this because those who view Europe from afar just do not see how varied it really is? Or is it because viewing Europe from afar they can see how distinctive it really is? We favor the conclusion inspired by the distant view because this is the perspective required to judge a global hypothesis. The fact that in southern Italy average age at marriage fell a year or two below Hajnal’s standard does not really challenge his hypothesis. At an average of 21 years it was still three or four years above the average found in China and India. Many of his critics fail to see that Hajnal’s ethnographic hypothesis is not about Europe. It is about the difference between Europe and the rest of the world.

Saito’s perspective is of particular interest because he accepts European uniqueness but rejects Hajnal’s claims with regards to the rest of the world. In his view, there are at least three household systems – a simple household system dominant in Europe, a grand household system dominant in India, China, and Russia; and a strong stem system dominant in Japan and Korea. The essence of Saito’s argument is that Hajnal was wrong in 1965 when he lumped all non-European systems together, but right in 1982 when he suggested that

“a stem family system in which a single heir remains in the household with his spouse after marriage while the old head does not retire does not fall under either of our two kinds of household formation systems”. This, Saito argues, is the Japanese system, which, like the European system, is “unique or almost unique in the world”.

We grant that the Japanese household system was neither a simple system nor a grand system, but we are not sure this stands as evidence of a Hajnalian trinity. Although the Japanese islands have long shared many cultural elements, they were only brought under a central authority in 1600. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that what we see in Japan during the Tokugawa period is a society in a state of transition, perhaps a society moving from a simple household system to a grand household system. Movement of this kind is suggested by the fact that women’s age at a marriage was as low (16.7) as in China in some regions and as high (23.4) as in Northwest Europe in other regions; by the fact that while weak stem households were the rule in some parts of the county, strong stem families with an admixture of grand families were the rule in others; and by the fact that in Korea, where unification was achieved seven hundred years earlier, a stem household system was clearly moving in the direction of a grand system.

A striking fact about stem household systems is that – compared with simple and grand systems – they are rare and small. We suspect that this is because they are inherently unstable. By assigning brothers to radically unequal social statuses, stem systems are set up on ground so narrow that they are blown down by wind from any direction. If the winds of change enhance their authority, parents try to control all their married sons, thereby pushing the system in the grand direction; while if the winds blow the other way, weakening parental authority, married sons all demand the right to set their own course, thereby creating a simple family system.

Fourth cluster
Our fourth cluster of papers includes the contributions by Osamu Saito, Chuang Ying-chang and Arthur Wolf, Jan Kok, and Hill Gates. All five authors accept, with minor qualifications, that Hajnal’s major variables cohere as he claimed,

but argue that he should have included additional variables. For Saito, “remarriage is a missing variable in Hajnal’s framework” (p. 8); for Chuang and Wolf, it is form of marriage; for Kok, illegitimacy, and for Gates, female labor. It is not, we suggest, coincidental that four of the five authors who argue for additional variable are Asian specialists. The view from the Asian end of the continent is more than just a view from afar. It is a view that brings into perspective features of social life that are not visible from the European end.

Saito presents remarriage rates as evidence that we need to add a strong stem system to Hajnal’s simple and grand systems. His argument is that “it is possible to distinguish three separate remarriage as well as marriage patterns in the past.” In China and Russia, where the grand household system ruled and marriage was early and nearly universal, “remarriage elasticity was very high, so that remarriage could become extremely frequent when mortality stayed high, but if mortality levels fell substantially, then the marriage market would diminish swiftly” (p. 20). In Northwest Europe, where the simple household system ruled and marriage was late and far from universal, “remarriage elasticity with respect to mortality change was intermediate” (p. 20). While in Japan, where, in Saito’s view, the strong stem household system ruled and marriage age was early but celibacy rare, remarriage was “characterized by a low elasticity with respect to mortality change.” This was, Saito argues, a reflection of the nature of marriage in a stem household system.

Chuang and Wolf’s argument brings out a feature of grand family systems that is entirely neglected by Hajnal. They demonstrate that China had not one, but several socially distinct forms of marriage. All the forms conformed to Hajnal’s rule 2b in that the young married couple started life together in a household ruled by an older couple. What varied was where the couple lived and when they started living together. They might reside either virilocally or uxorilocally, and they might begin living together at marriage, fifteen years before marriage, or not until five years after marriage. Whether or not variability of this kind is a general feature of grand household systems remains to be seen, but it may be significant even if it was not general. The fact that it was marked in China suggests that it may express a tendency in grand systems that only emerge when they are fully developed.

Jan Kok argues that “to Hajnal’s enumeration of [household] rules we should add the principle that procreation by unmarried persons was not tolerated” (p. 1). He demonstrates that despite ages at marriage as late as 25 for women and 30 for men, European women rarely bore a child before marriage. Until the late 18th century illegitimate births constituted less than 5 percent of all births in England and Sweden and less than 3 percent in the Netherlands and France. Moreover, Kok shows that the few women who did bear their first child before marriage were as old or older than women who bore their first child after mar-
riage. Thus what might be taken as evidence of a breakdown of moral discipline was often “the result of anticipated but frustrated marriage”. The questions Kok raises will have to be answered by anyone claiming to explain the European marriage pattern. How did Europeans control premarital sexuality? Chinese and Indians did it by breaking girls’ feet and concealing unmarried women behind high walls. How did Europeans do it while sending young women out to work as servants and thereby creating ample opportunity for unsupervised interaction with young men?

In his 1965 paper Hajnal observed that “many (...) things cannot be the same in a society where a bride is usually a girl of sixteen, and one in which she is typically a woman of 24”.27 One of these things, Jan Kok argues, is the kind of social controls necessary to prevent premarital pregnancies. Another, Hill Gates argues, is the kind of work women can perform. For her, the neglected variable in Hajnal's grand scheme is female labor. Where women married at sixteen, as they commonly did in India and China, the great majority of all unmarried women were little girls. The result was that under a grand household system very few women could perform tasks that required considerable strength or skill. They were either too young and inexperienced or they were kept too busy caring for children. In all agrarian societies women worked both before and after marriage, but it was only under simple household systems that very many could work in the fields or tend large animals. What were the consequences? Could it be that the European marriage pattern was part of an adaptation requiring certain kinds of female labor?

Niche hypothesis

The issues or interests that identify the clusters discussed so far are all concerned with the ethnographic hypothesis at the bottom of the Hajnal pyramid. The next two clusters are concerned with the niche hypothesis at the second level. The first includes the papers by George Fertig and Paul Klep. As already noted, Fertig is very sceptical of the validity of the niche hypothesis. He thinks that “it may be valid for understanding the behavior of specific groups at specific times”, but argues that it is “not helpful for understanding entire social systems such as ‘pre-industrial Europe’”(p. 9). In his view, the niche hypothesis is an ideological construct propounded by continental political theorists, and is only relevant to the understanding of European marriage because in some places the authorities made marriage a privilege that was only granted to those who could demonstrate the ability to support a family.

Paul Klep is equally sceptical of the value of the niche hypothesis, but for reasons different than those given by Fertig. Comparing various regions of the

Netherlands in the 18th century, he finds that the availability of niches – as measured by the availability of farmland – cannot account for variation in the propensity to marry. The robust variables are those measuring parental authority and the attractions of celibacy. This leads Klep to argue that the niche hypothesis – as understood by Malthus and neo-Malthusians like E.A. Wrigley – is based on a questionable assumption. It assumes that young people wanted to marry and start a family as soon as possible, while the fact is that many were very reluctant to shoulder this responsibility at an early age, if at all.

It is obvious that the niche hypothesis as such was never capable of explaining the European marriage pattern. It says that until the mid-19th century Europeans married late and often not at all because land, jobs, etc. – access to the means of production – were scarce. Therefore, to explain why non-Europeans married early and universally, it has to say that land and jobs were not scarce in China and India, which is patently ridiculous. The real problem has always been to explain why independent niches were required for marriage in Europe but not “in the rest of the world”. Hajnal understood this and suggested that it might be because “the young couple could be incorporated into a larger unit, such as a joint family”. But if Fertig and Klep are right this is not a useful suggestion. They conclude that even under a simple household system late marriage cannot be attributed to niche availability except where governments made a marriage a privilege dependent on having a niche. Why, then, did Europeans marry later and in smaller numbers than people elsewhere?

This is the question that clusters the papers by Klep, Wolf, Hendrickx and Gates, and Gates. Although Klep’s paper is primarily concerned with variation within Europe, his conclusions have implications for the differences between Europe and the rest of the world. One conclusion, already noted, is that most young Europeans were not inclined to marry as early as possible. The other is that they were often prevented from marrying by parents who needed their assistance. To allow them to marry would deprive the parents of the needed assistance because in Europe neolocality was a nearly inviolable norm. Might it not be, then, that marriage was early and nearly universal in China, India, and Russia because in these societies parents forced their reluctant children to marry and did not fear losing their assistance when they married because neolocality was not the norm? Indeed, might it not be that neolocality was not the norm because parents had the authority to control their children after they married?

Although he does not explicitly recognize the implications of Klep’s conclusions, this is the basis of the thesis developed by Arthur Wolf. His argument turns on a distinction between what he terms “state patriarchy” and “property patriarchy.” Under state patriarchy, exemplified most clearly by China and Rus-

sia, parents struck a devil’s bargain with the state. In return for granting the state the right to exploit them, parents got the right to exploit their children, not just as children but for all of their natural lives. The result was that marriage was early and nearly universal because children and grandchildren were capital resources, like land and buildings, and, like all capital resources, were wanted in larger rather than smaller quantities.

Under what Wolf calls property patriarchy, exemplified by Europe and especially Northwest Europe, parental authority was weak because it was not guaranteed by a higher authority. It depended on the control of property, which meant that the poor had little or no means of controlling their children and that the wealthy were dependent on a weak combination of threats and bribes. Under Chinese patriarchy, a failure of filial piety gave legal cause to have rebellious sons imprisoned or exiled; under European patriarch, it did not. The European state guaranteed contracts, but not parental authority. The result was that people spent their money to hire servants rather than investing it in the production of children and grandchildren. European children could not be exploited with equal freedom.

The strength of Wolf’s argument is that it explains why marriage was early and universal in India, China, and Russia. The weakness is that it does not explain why marriage was late and sporadic in Europe. Why, if European children were free to do as they pleased, didn’t they marry early and in greater numbers? The strength of Klep’s argument is that it answers this question. The weakness is that it doesn’t explain why marriage was early and universal outside of Europe. Why, if they enjoyed state sponsored authority, didn’t Chinese parents use that authority the way European parents used their authority? Obviously, what is needed is to combine the two arguments. All that is needed to do so is to recognize that Wolf’s claim that Europeans parents were weak doesn’t contradict Klep’s claims that they were strong. Klep takes as his standard parents’ ability to control their unmarried children, while Wolf takes as his, their ability to control their married children.

Combining the two arguments produces a nearly complete explanation of all the essential features of the simple and grand household systems. In China, Russia, and India, where parents had the ability to control their married as well as their unmarried children, marriage was early and universal because people wanted as many dependents as possible, servants were rare because children were used as servants, and households were large and complex because young married couples were not free to reside where they pleased. In Europe, in sharp contrast, where parents had the ability to control their unmarried children but not their married children, marriage was late and sporadic because many children were reluctant to marry and many parents reluctant to let them marry, servants were

common because they were more exploitable than children, and households were small because once married, children were free to set up independently.

In their paper documenting the great variety of marriage forms found in China, Chuang and Wolf suggest that this solution to the problem posed by Hajnal has not been recognized as a possibility because the question has always been viewed from a European perspective. They argue that marriage took many different forms in China because of the great authority enjoyed by Chinese parents. They could impose whatever arrangement that best suited their interests. A Chinese Hajnal would have been surprised that this was not the case in Europe. He might even have been appalled just as Malthus was appalled by Chinese custom. Instead, then, of looking for the conditions that affect young people’s marriage chances, a Chinese Hajnal would have looked for the conditions that affect parental control of marriage. This, Chuang and Wolf suggest, would have “led away from the Malthusian concern with the balance between population and resources to a more Marxian concern with forms of domination.”

Like Klep and Wolf, Hendrickx and Gates accept the need for an alternative to the niche hypothesis, but approach the problem from a radically different perspective. They argue that “while niche attainment was surely important to the ubiquity of life cycle service in its home region, an explanation that stops with an emphasis on individual and couple interests is incomplete for both Europe and Japan.” They suggest that “the most fruitful direction for future comparative study might be one that further investigates the circulation of youthful labor made possible by life cycle servanthood and late marriage.” An example of what they have in mind is outlined by Gates in her own paper.

It is well known that the Northwestern European gut is an evolutionary product of the northwestern European dairy industry. The nutritional value of the milk produced by the industry selected for the retention into adulthood of the enzyme (lactase) needed to digest lactose. Gates’s suggestion is that the northwestern European household system is also a product of its dairy industry. In the argument developed by Klep and Wolf the pivotal figure in the causal chain is the patriarch. In Gates’s argument it is the dairymaid. “The dairymaid’s work required skill, cleanliness, perhaps a degree of autonomy. But it required strength as well. Milking is tiring; cattle are large and often dangerous” (p. 16). And when it came to making the cheese that was so important in the northern European economy, the process required “strong adults who were free of childcare for extended, uninterrupted, intense work.” One of Gates’s sources describes cheese making as “an extremely exacting, touchy, and laborious process, demanding unremitting attention” (p. 16).

In their paper in this volume Plakans and Wetherall endorse Michael Mitterauer’s suggestion that “the notion of ecotypes – plains, mountains, valleys, and seacoasts in combination with differing modes of production – be incorporated into explanations of family variation” (p. 15). This is precisely what Gates has done. The North European dairy industry was not a freestanding cultural creation. It depended on pasture adequate to see large numbers of large animals through long winters. It would not have existed without the rainfall produced by northern Europe’s well-ventilated seacoast. The dairymaid, who was encouraged to marry late because she was needed to tend cows and make cheese, was part of an adaptation to this environment. The argument is an answer to the question Hajnal raised when he pointed out that even if waiting for a livelihood explained why European men married late, “it would still need to be explained how women’s age at marriage was affected”. This is particularly important for those who adhere to the equilibrium hypothesis.

The last papers to be considered are those by Theo Engelen and Monica Das Gupta. They are united by an interest in the equilibrium hypothesis at the top of the Hajnal pyramid. In the course of tracing the history of the hypothesis Engelen notes the many criticisms that have been directed against it, but concludes that it would be “a serious mistake” to ignore the hypothesis “as a relic of the past”. His optimistic prediction is that combined with demographic transition theory, the hypothesis is about to start a new life. Indeed, he suggests that if the hypothesis was ever dead, it has already been resurrected in the writings of Dirk J. van de Kaa, who gives nuptiality a central place in his account of the history of European fertility after 1965.

Although she is sharply critical of Hajnal, Das Gupta also accepts the equilibrium hypothesis. Indeed, her criticism of Hajnal is that he failed to see that a nuptiality valve was part of the demographic machinery of grand household systems as well as simple household systems. Her thesis is that Europeans were not alone in regulating marriage for the purpose of balancing population and resources. This was also done in India and China where sons were discouraged from marrying if there were several of them and the household’s land was not sufficient to support several more families. The difference was that where this regulation was implemented by individuals and couples in Europe, it was implemented by households acting collectively in India and China.


Although neither Engelen nor Das Gupta addresses the niche hypothesis by name, it is clear that both must accept it. The equilibrium hypothesis at the top of the Hajnal pyramid fails if not supported by the niche hypothesis below it. Thus we have in the volume a clear cut disagreement about the validity of the niche hypothesis. Exaggerating somewhat, we can say that where Fertig and Klep view the niche hypothesis as an ideologically inspired construct with no empirical grounding, Engelen and Das Gupta view it as a central tenet of the demographic theory of the future with an empirical base in India and China as well as in Europe.

The reader should also note that Das Gupta and Wolf have radically different views of the grand household. Exaggerating again to clarify their differences, we can say that where Das Gupta treats the grand family as a collective enterprise governed by an altruistic “corporate ethic”, Wolf treats it as little empire governed by the largely selfish interests of the household head. In Das Gupta’s view, grand households deliberately regulate marriage to serve the long-term interest of the household community; in Wolf’s view, grand households make every effort to marry as many sons as possible because this serves the short-term goals of their ruling elite.

In an essay that is notable for bridging the chasm between biological anthropology and family history Daniel Scott Smith compares two views of the fact that neolocality was the rule in Northwestern Europe. In what he calls “the weak cultural” view “all cultures are weird, with the English or, by extension, the Northwest European being only the most peculiar of the lot.” In the alternative “strong, neoindividualist” view, “the rest of the world outside England and Northwestern Europe is peculiar, burdened with coercive institutions and practices”. This is because the strong view predicts that

if people have a real choice (...) they will live in households no more complex than those of the simple family. Complex household (...) are the result of coercive institutions or norms. Nuclear households are closer to being natural, biologically based units.

Smith believes that “if it can be more fully elucidated, the strong theory is potentially more valuable than its weaker variant.” What, he asks, is the point of studying English family history if the conclusion can only be that the English are “primordially peculiar”? We agree with the implied criticism of historical particularism, but question Smith’s preference for the strong view when he takes it to

34. Smith, “The curious history of theorizing”, 347.
mean that “the rest of the world outside England and Northwestern Europe is (...) burdened with coercive institutions and practices.” This is only defensible because Smith stresses neolocality as the primary difference between simple and grand household system. The judgment is easily reversed if one follows Jan Kok and focuses instead on the control of adolescent sexuality instead. Kok is surely right in assuming that if young people have “a real choice”, they will choose to engage in sexual relations rather than not. From this perspective it was the European simple household system that was coercive and unnatural.

The same point can be made with reference to the question raised by Paul Klep: “Do adult children really want to marry at an early age?” If the answer is yes, the simple family household system is coercive; if it is no, the grand system must bear this opprobrium. The point is that everything we say about these systems rests on assumptions about what is natural for human beings. Such assumptions are unavoidable. They are there under every argument whether the author acknowledges them or not. Smith assumes that it is natural for young human beings to want the autonomy provided by neolocal residence. He therefore views grand household systems as coercive and simple households systems as natural. The challenge from his point of view is to explain the grand systems. Kok assumes that it is natural for young humans to want to enter into sexual relations within a year or two of puberty. On this assumption simple household systems are at least as coercive and as challenging as grand household systems. Klep does not deny sexual desire but introduces other assumptions that make it easier to account for simple household systems. The price he pays is that his assumptions make it more difficult to account for grand household systems.

Conclusions
We draw five conclusions from the experience of editing the papers that appear in this volume. They are offered in the hope that they will help our successors do better than the generals.

Our first conclusion is that despite the reservations expressed by Viazzo, Plakans, and Wetherell, Hajnal’s ethnographic hypothesis stands. There is a clear, readily identifiable difference between European household systems and those found in most of the rest of the world. It is a finding that we must not allow critics to bury prematurely because it is our best hope for writing books that add up rather than just stack up.

Our second conclusion is that what constitutes disproof of the ethnographic hypothesis must be clarified. Exceptions like the grand families of Italian and French sharecroppers do not disprove the hypothesis. They show only that the global conditions that produce simple and grand household systems are not the only conditions that affect such systems. They do not justify the claim that Hajnal was wrong in including Italy and France in Europe.
Our third conclusion is that the ethnographic hypothesis must be given a developmental dimension. We cannot judge suggestions like that offered by Osamu Saito until we can identify at least the initial and mature stages of Hajnal’s two systems. What is needed is specification of the order in which the symptomatic features of the two systems appear as they develop and disappear as they disintegrate.

Our fourth conclusion is that there is still no adequate explanation of why Europe was unique or nearly unique. Even if Fertig and Klep are wrong in rejecting the niche hypothesis, there is still no account of why niches were necessary in Europe but not elsewhere. It could be because grand households were the rule outside of Europe, but this would require explaining why the European system was a simple system. We need to consider alternatives of the kind suggested by Klep, Wolf, and Gates.

Our fifth and final conclusion is that it is time for students of marriage and family systems to look carefully at their assumptions concerning what is and is not natural for our species. This is a minefield that historians and social anthropologists are understandably reluctant to cross, but the hard fact of the matter is that there is no escaping the problem. We are all standing on mined ground.
3

The Hajnal hypothesis before Hajnal

Georg Fertig
1. The Hajnal hypothesis? Which Hajnal hypothesis?

John Hajnal bears but a limited responsibility for what has come to be known as the Hajnal hypothesis. In his famous paper of 1965, Hajnal quite explicitly made clear that the “primary concern of [his] account has been the mere existence of the pattern” of late and non-universal marriage in Western Europe, and that “[t]his aspect should be kept distinct from the search for explanations.” Ever since, these exculpatory remarks did not save Hajnal from being identified as a standard reference for one particular explanation of the European Marriage Pattern, the land niche model. According to this model, which has been especially popular among historical demographers during the 1970s, European couples willing to marry had to wait until a self-sufficient “niche” or “position” was transferred to them, typically a farm the husband’s father bequeathed to his son. Therefore, the death of a landowner and the marriage of a new couple were linked events. This mechanism, it is assumed by many authors, helped secure the balance between population and economic resources. Hajnal himself has made this interpretation of his paper plausible by arguing that “[i]n Europe it has been necessary for a man to defer marriage until he could obtain an independent livelihood adequate to support a family.” Although the niche thesis certainly offers a legitimate interpretation of Hajnal’s paper, it is not without alternatives, and as François Hendrickx has recently emphasized, Hajnal called it into question himself.

In the niche version of the Hajnal hypothesis, strong assumptions are made on two issues, none of which can quite explicitly be found in Hajnal’s text. First, it is assumed that the resources which are used for household formation can be described as a niche or “Stelle” (position), in other words, the stable holding of a self-employed householder such as a peasant or a craftsman which guarantees that its holder will not become a burden to his wider family or community. This assumption is not trivial at all. In the sociological or economic (as opposed to juridical or theological) sense, marriage is defined as household formation. But what is a household? If, as Hajnal states, “the household is the principle unit of economic production as well as consumption” (p. 132), then the availability of input goods, such as land, for this production (or income generating) unit is a necessary precondition for marriage. But if the household is defined as a consumption (or income pooling) unit, the availability of land will not be an issue, although the formation of such a consumption unit will still have its price. Obviously, a Big Topic of social history is addressed here: the loss of functions – especially, productive functions – sustained by the household during modernization.5

Second, it is assumed by the land niche model that marriage is a privilege,6 that there is some kind of cultural or societal mechanism by which it is determined the “position” of which couple is sufficient, so that they may marry, and whose “position” is not sufficient, so that the societal license for marriage cannot be given. Typically, “positions” are assumed to be transferred as a whole, and mostly by means of inheritance in the male line, as opposed to the land market. In this case, the decision who is entitled to marry is very straightforward: only those men may marry who inherit property or whose bride is an heiress. This has consequences for the notion of balance between population and economy that is brought about by the niche mechanism. According to the niche model, balance is the object of strategies, something people know about and intend. In society, people consciously adjust their decisions to incumbent risks and problems.7 An alternative to this sociological approach is presented by microeconomic theory which emphasizes equilibrium as an unintended result of individual planning, coordinated by an “invisible hand.”8 This issue should be kept apart from the issue of household functions. It rather relates to

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5. The loss of functions is a classical topic in family sociology, emphasized among others by Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost (London: Methuen, 1965) and Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder, The European Family: Patriarchy to Partnership from the Middle Ages to the Present (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982 [1977]).


another Big Topic: Did the market as an anonymous, unconscious, and non-intentional way of coordinating people’s plans emerge during modernization, or has it always been decisive?

Since the early 1970s, quotations of Hajnal and the European Marriage Pattern have been used as references for the niche model in numerous discussions of marriage behavior in western Europe. One example, and presumably also an important step in the mutual transfer of demographic concepts across the Channel of England, was the conference organized by German social historians in Bad Homburg in April 1975, the papers of which have subsequently been edited by Werner Conze. Among the participants of this conference and of three pre-conferences since 1973 were some of the most distinguished family historians and historical demographers and population sociologists both from the English-speaking and the German-speaking countries. In the published conference proceedings, the niche argument is discussed by Peter Laslett, Hans Linde, Roger Schofield, Adelheid Castell, Arthur Imhof, and Hans Medick. Arthur E. Imhof’s reading of Hajnal seems to be quite representative. He argued that the high age at marriage he found in his classical study on the Hessian village of Heuchelheim should be understood in terms of “the Hajnalian ‘European marriage patterns’ [...]”, that is, a [...] uniquely high age of marriage in (west) European populations which was based on a unique socio-economic development since the high Middle Ages until the early 19th century.


9. Conze (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte*.


15. Medick, “Zur strukturellen Funktion” (267, also quoting Hajnal).
century, according to which the societal licence for marriage was contingent upon the ability to provide for a wife and children, that is, a position which allows full earnings. [...] One has always attempted to prevent [Malthusian positive checks] e.g. [...] by raising the female age at marriage.”16 In this interpretation, an aggregate parameter such as female age at marriage is deliberately set by society in order to achieve a specific purpose, that is, the prevention of famine. Clearly, Imhof attributes not only the pattern to Hajnal, but also the explanation, and he makes it quite clear that “positions,” “societal licences,” and an intentional regulation of population growth are crucial elements of that explanation. Notably, Imhof’s reading of Hajnal in the context of the niche model is far from atypical. In the 1990s, many historians still understood the Hajnal hypothesis in terms of high ages at marriage, high celibacy rates, and a societal control of the marriage decision based on the transfer of production units across generations. For example, George Alter claimed that in Hajnal’s view “[t]he central feature of [marriage] behavior is the requirement that newly married couples must form economically self-sufficient households. [...] In an agrarian society this implied waiting for parents to pass the farm to the next generation, or the long, arduous process of saving enough to buy a farm.” In other words, you need a farm in order to get married.17

Hajnal’s own interpretation of the European Marriage Pattern is less straightforward, although the niche reading of his 1965 paper is not quite unjustified. As we can read in his text,18 Hajnal’s main interest is directed to the question of the relatively high standards of living found in “Europe.” On the one hand, “late marriage brings about wealth”; on the other hand, “wealth may equally cause late marriage.” In this context, Hajnal argues that marriage requires an “independent livelihood adequate to support a family.” It is at this point that he discusses the need to “wait till land became available” as a possible explanation for the European Marriage Pattern.19 On the same and the next page, Hajnal calls the wait-for-land explanation into question himself since the mechanisms linking the death of a male owner and the marriage of his son are unknown and especially since female marriage behavior – which is crucial in a demographic perspective – cannot be explained by the model. Thus, the gist of Hajnal’s 1965 paper is not that Europeans married late and not universally because of a specific mechanism or social rule, but simply that they did behave in this way. His cautiousness in giving any explicit explanation seems under-

18. Hajnal’s interpretation of the EMP is limited to few pages (130-4, esp. 133) of his 1965 paper.
standable given his conviction that a “full explanation of the background of European marriage patterns would probably lead into such topics as the rise of capitalism and the protestant ethic”\textsuperscript{20} – quite a treacherous ground.

Consequently, only bits and pieces of a Hajnal hypothesis beyond the mere existence of a “pattern” can be detected in the 1965 paper. It seems clear from the text that the formation of a household – understood as a unit of both consumption and production\textsuperscript{21} – is an important context for decision whether or not to marry, and when. But the crucial elements of the niche theory – the issues of position and privilege – are left undefined by Hajnal. It is not made clear if the concept of wealth causing late marriage\textsuperscript{22} is valid for those who are not wealthy, in other words, the criteria are left undefined for what is a position and what is not. It is not made clear who “insisted on a certain standard of living [...] as a prerequisite for marriage”\textsuperscript{23} – the couples themselves, their parents, or the local authorities, in other words, whether marriage was a privilege granted by “the society,” or an individual decision made on one’s own risk. Also, the question of inheritance is left open: although Hajnal speculates that impartible inheritance systems or what he calls “the European stem family”\textsuperscript{24} might cause the European Marriage Pattern, he also acknowledges that there may be other “social arrangements”\textsuperscript{25} that played a role – a society where land circulates on the market does not seem to be excluded from the models speculated about by Hajnal, nor does the practice of partible inheritance.

What kind of society had Hajnal in mind when he wrote his classical paper? There is a certain tension between his argument and the concept of “peasant society.” According to his article of 1982, what Hajnal had in mind was not a peasant society in the sense of Chayanov, where there are neither a labor nor a land market.\textsuperscript{26} Instead, Hajnal claimed that the existence of a labor market was crucial for the functioning of the system. He even argued that the European Marriage Pattern provided the cultural context where Adam Smith’s economic theory could be developed.\textsuperscript{27} Still, Hajnal’s concept, even in the more explicit 1982 version, cannot simply be equated with free market capitalism – he does not say very much about the land market, and the labor

\textsuperscript{20} Hajnal, “European Marriage Patterns in Perspective,” 132.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Alexander V. Chayanov, The theory of peasant economy (1923; Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1966).
market is not free in the sense of modern economic theory, since it is a market in the bound labor of servants. The niche model, as discussed at the Bad Homburg conference, also seems more limited in scope than the type of society Hajnal had in mind. It is tailored to a society of noble landowners, dependent peasant producers, a limited number of master craftsmen, and servants. It assumes the existence of a labor market only for unmarried, semi-free laborers. This is clearly an extremely unrealistic assumption for many parts of Western Europe, where day laborers, proto-industrial producers, and other sub-peasant strata were common during the early modern period as well as during the 19th century. As far as inheritance is seen as the main channel of land transfer, the niche model downplays the notion of a land market. According to the model, it is no option to form new households based on expected income from dependent employment, credit, alms, or parental support. Obviously, the niche theory makes strong assumptions about the institutional context of marriage, and it assumes fundamental changes between historical epochs. We may therefore understand it as an “elaborate” interpretation of Hajnal’s European Marriage Pattern.

Not explaining the European Marriage Pattern, but alluding to quite a number of relevant explanatory contexts may have contributed a lot to the paper’s popularity. Since Hajnal did not formulate the Hajnal hypothesis, his readers were forced to do so. My discussion of “the Hajnal hypothesis before Hajnal” will be aimed at explaining why the Hajnal hypothesis was read the way it has been read, rather than explaining the arguments that have influenced Hajnal himself – an issue that could probably be clarified by himself in a more efficient way. But let us first ask more explicitly, if Hajnal could – and should – have been read differently. Indeed, there are variations in the way the European Marriage Pattern has been interpreted in the literature on family history and demography.

One option is to explain the European Marriage Pattern without referring at all to the availability of “niches” in the sense of production units. Such explanations focus on neolocal household formation: couldn’t wage laborers or proto-industrialists demonstrate a reluctant marriage behavior as well as proprietors? For laborers, too, marriage is a risky and important step. Hajnal’s second paper corroborates this view. In that paper, he dropped all references to the niche mechanism, and he made clear that a “household, for our purposes, must be defined as a housekeeping or consumption unit.”

Moreover, he quoted from an Austro-Hungarian source that “[a]ll those should be counted in one household [...] who do not cook for themselves.”

form to the concept of a household in economic and sociological theory, where households coordinate consumption, the firm is the main unit of production, and separation of the two is crucial. In this view, it does not take a land niche to form a new household, but pots and pans. Obviously, this is a very important difference – forming a consumption unit and cooking for oneself may be a big endeavour for young people, but it is a small thing compared to forming or taking over a firm. As to the issue of marriage as a privilege, nothing is said at all in the second paper. The “formation rules” presented in the second paper are again descriptive rather than normative, and nothing is said about whose obligation it is to see that they are carried out.

We might distill a concise explanation of the European Marriage Pattern, that is, an alternative to the elaborate niche reading of Hajnal, from his second article as well as some conceptual papers from the Cambridge Group and their intellectual neighbours.

**Hajnal’s European Marriage Pattern: a concise interpretation**

*Neolocality:* Marriage entails household formation.

*Household functions:* Households are independent consumption units in the sense that each of them provides welfare for its members, but they are not self-sufficient in the sense that their production is aimed at satisfying their consumption. Forming a new household implies that the former (parental) consumption units are no longer responsible for their ex-members.

*Subsidiarity:* In case a household fails in providing for its members, the community or territory is responsible. There is a hierarchical and subsidiary system of provision for the needy, the main elements built on households, communities, and states.

*Costs of marriage for children:* Since marriage ends parental responsibility for a child’s consumption, it is costly for the children. This raises the age at marriage as well as the celibacy rate.

*Costs of marriage for communities and states:* Since marriage creates exter-

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nalities for communities and states, these are interested in controlling the marriage decision and in enforcing the norm that such external costs should be kept at a minimum.

**Input goods:** The availability of input goods (factors) such as land and credit is no precondition of marriage, and the circulation of these goods is therefore not strictly linked to marriage behavior. Land circulates in small or big parcels, within the family system or on the market. Credit is available for households.

**Labor:** Income is generated from the labor market as well as from self-employment.

**Agency:** Demo-economic balance is primarily an unintended result of individual action.

In this view, we would read Hajnal as a theorist of neolocal household formation and the need for a marriage fund. According to such a concise interpretation, marriage was a costly step in western Europe since it typically ensued in the formation of a new consumption unit – neolocal either in the sense of setting up a completely new household, or of taking over the headship of an existing household. This led to a high age at marriage, non-universal marriage, and most importantly, a marriage behavior that was elastic to the fluctuations of the economy. Marriage ages and celibacy rates would be influenced in this view by institutional variables, but only indirectly. The responsibility of the collectivity for support in hard times would make it easier for the parental family to withdraw from responsibility for the new couple’s consumptory needs. The institution of life-cycle servitude would make it easier to wait, earn, and save money. But direct institutional control of the marriage decision would then not be crucial to the system, nor would the availability of land or the “chain between reproduction and inheritance.” We might note that the model rests upon the issue of costs, and largely ignores the incentives to marriage. Despite the latter shortcoming, understanding marriage as neolocal nuclear consumption unit forma-

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34. For this understanding of neolocality, see Smith, “American Family.”

35. Laslett, “Family, Kinship and Collectivity.”
tion offers a more simple alternative to the elaborate interpretation of marriage as a controlled transfer of consumption-and-production units.

As opposed to the concise model, a formal summary of the elaborate thesis could be drawn up as follows.

*Hajnal’s European Marriage Pattern: an elaborate interpretation*

**Neolocality:** Marriage entails household formation.

**Household functions:** Households combine the functions of production, consumption, and domination. Households are self-sufficient in the sense that their production is aimed at satisfying their consumption. Forming a new household implies that the former (parental) households can no longer use the labor of their ex-members for production, that they are no longer responsible for their consumption, and that they cease to control their children’s everyday life.

**Subsidiarity:** In case a household fails in providing for its members, producing enough, or regulating the behavior of its members, these obligations are taken care of by the community or territory. There is a hierarchical and subsidiary system of provision for the needy, of economic production, and of social control, built on households, communities, and states.

**Costs of marriage for parents and children:** Since marriage ends parental responsibility for a child’s consumption, it is costly for the children. This raises the age at marriage as well as the celibacy rate as long as the timing of marriage is decided by the children. Since it also ends the child’s contribution to the parental household income, it is costly for the parents. This also raises the age at marriage and celibacy rate as far as marriage is controlled by the parents.

**Costs of marriage for communities and states:** Since marriage creates externalities for communities and states, these are interested in controlling the marriage decision and in enforcing the norm that such external costs should be kept at a minimum.

**Input goods:** Since households are production units, input goods (factors) are needed for their formation. In the absence of factor markets, e.g., in a society dominated by noble landowners, these are available only through the family system, that is, by marriage or inheritance. It is not assumed that credit is available for young households.

Labor: Since the household is a unit not only of production and consumption, but also of domination, those who work in these households do not have the status of free workers but rather of semi-free servants. Employers therefore are able to control the marriage decisions of their employees.

Agency: Demo-economic balance is primarily an intended result of social control.

Obviously, the second list is more complicated, and it will fit a smaller group of social settings. As far as they differ from the concise list, most points in the second list are derived from the definition of a household as a unit of production, consumption, and control. Point 6 leads our attention to the question if factor markets do exist. This is not a crucial issue in the concise version. Most advocates of the niche thesis seem to hold that in an agrarian society land is not available on the market, but through the family system. Point 8 (agency) also sets the two readings of the European Marriage Pattern apart without being strictly derivable from the definition of the household.

It has not been the purpose of this short chapter to establish which reading of the Hajnal hypothesis is more appropriate for understanding European families in the past. Even though the concise model captures Hajnal’s own ideas, particularly as presented in the 1982 article, more closely than the niche version, we are not obliged to be Hajnal’s orthodox followers. Why should historians not use a classic theory in a creative way? Still, it is an empirical question if this creative use is helpful. A model that emphasizes households as units of production may be valid for understanding the marriage behavior of specific social sub-groups in specific places or periods in time. It is however not too helpful for understanding entire social systems such as “pre-industrial Europe”. Moreover, empirical research has not been pursued in an equally satisfactory way in all countries west of the Hajnal line. Systematic studies of demographic balance are mostly limited to England. Based on time series methods, they have established various forms of welfare or real wage dependent nuptiality control, rejecting the niche model for England. The few comparable studies on other parts of western Europe such as France, Sweden, or Prussia find marriage sensitive to real wages, too. Rigorous statistical tests of the niche thesis using material from continental

37. An exception is Hendrickx, this volume, who argues for a land market as part of a niche mechanism.
Europe are quite rare. Scholars who take a life course approach have found the niche model doubtful. The niche model is typically applied *ex post* for interpreting observed patterns of high celibacy and late marriage. Sufficient *ex post* explanations of the European Marriage Pattern can however be developed using the concise interpretation, too. Consequently, the more simple version may be preferable, following the rule of Ockham’s razor, which suggests that unnecessary assumptions should be dropped.


41. Jürgen Schlumbohm, “The History of the Family
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The Hajnal hypothesis and transition theory

Theo Engelen
Most historical demographers will agree on the fact that their discipline only reached maturity by the end of the Second World War. When one would challenge them to list the most influential publications since that time, two titles would certainly be included by all of them. In chronological order Frank W. Notestein is the first author on the list. His famous article “Population. The Long View” is often referred to as the official starting point of the demographic transition theory.¹ The second important paper originates in 1965, when John Hajnal published his ideas on marriage patterns in Europe. Looking back from the 1990s, this may well be the most cited article in the historical demographic and family history literature. Its impact on our thinking about marriage, fertility and population control, therefore, can hardly be overestimated.²

The two articles on our imaginary list have many things in common. Both authors are dealing with population balance in the past, and the way in which this balance could be disturbed and restored. In other words, Notestein as well as Hajnal are convinced that, when dealing with the demography of the past four centuries, they basically were confronted with a homeostatic situation. Whenever the old equilibrium was disturbed population after a certain time lag automatically adjusted to find a new one. Notestein thought of mortality as the principal agent within this system. For John Hajnal, nuptiality was the regulator of population development. In this matter Hajnal was the more modern of the two, although it took until the 1980s before the decisive impact of nuptiality was canonized.³

We can distinguish two other resemblances in the papers. First, without stating it as explicitly in the title as Notestein does, Hajnal also takes the long view. The demographic transition theory covers many centuries. The first phase of “primitive” equilibrium of births and deaths at a high level is not dated exactly, but in the case of Europe logically refers to the period from the Middle Ages on. In that part of the world the new balance of births and deaths is reached again in the 1950s or 1960s. Hajnal in turn concludes his 1965 article by stating

“that the distinctively European pattern can be traced back with fair confidence as far as the seventeenth century in the general population”. There is also a clearcut end to the pattern in Hajnal’s view. In the two decades before 1965 “the ‘European pattern’ seems to be disappearing”, he writes.4

Geographically, both Hajnal and Notestein claim that their statements have global relevance. Although Notestein starts his argument by pointing at the possible pitfalls of forecasting population trends, the rest of his paper essentially deals with the conviction that all modernizing populations pass through three stages, from “high growth potential” via “transitional growth” to “incipient decline”.5 Judging by the title, one would expect Hajnal’s writings to be only dealing with Europe. A closer look, however, soon reveals a larger ambition. One only needs to cite one sentence (“Non-European civilizations are like Eastern Europe, or more so.”6) to prove this point.

It will be clear by now that the two articles we are discussing are tied to each other in many ways. Therefore, one would expect many cross-references. Hajnal, however, never mentioned the transition theory, neither in his 1965 paper, nor in the 1983 sequel.7 This is the more surprising if one realizes that, in those days, the demographic transition theory was not just another model. It offered guidelines to scientists as well as to policy makers all over the world on how to deal with population questions. One of the obvious attractions of the theory was that it reduced an extremely complicated reality to a rather straightforward model. The model even suggested to be valid for every society on its way to modernization. And yet, we can not find a single reference to it in Hajnal’s papers.

Does Frank Notestein mention marriage restriction in his work, then? The answer is negative. When discussing modern birth control practices in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, he even explicitly stated: “They are the only populations that have thus far shown a way by which growth can be checked other than through death (...).”8 Certainly, Notestein wrote these words about twenty years before John Hajnal published his seminal paper on the European marriage pattern, so one can not expect a reference to this specific article. His total neglect of nuptiality as a possible regulator of population is remarkable all the same.

In the first part of this paper an effort is made to understand why demographic transition theory and the model of the European marriage pattern seem to have

lived separate lives, at least for the two important authors in question. Is there an explanation for the neglect of each others findings? Next, we will touch upon the reasons why a meaningful collaboration between the two theories seems so obvious. With the help of two authors from the past, we hope to show how transition theory and marriage restriction can be linked in one general model. In the last part we will look into the relevance of both theories in the late 1990s. Can we still benefit from the insights offered by Notestein and Hajnal, or are they just of historical interest?

Transition theory and marriage restriction separated?
With the benefit of hindsight we clearly see how closely marriage restriction and transition theory are related. Why, then, we wonder is it that we do not find this relationship in the writings of Frank Notestein and John Hajnal?

Let us start with Notestein. One would expect him to have known at least the writings of Thomas Malthus. This first modern demographer already pointed to the contrast between two kinds of demographic regimes in 1798. In “the less civilized parts of the world and in the past” population just grew until it was stopped by the so called “positive checks” (poverty, disease, famine, and war). This is perfectly in line with transition theory, but Malthus also found an alternative to this grim scenario. In “the different states of modern Europe”, these disastrous results were largely avoided by means of what he called “preventive checks”, the most important of which was “delay of the marriage union”.9

To be sure, at the cradle of the demographic transition theory we find many fathers. Next to Notestein, we can distinguish, among others, the French demographer Adolphe Landry. Again, this author could have influenced Notestein, for in his La Révolution Démographique (1934) he explicitly deals with the marriage restriction: “(...) Le moyen que l’on employait à cet effet [i.e. to maintain the accustomed standard of living] était de pratiquer le célibat, ou de retarder le mariage. Une fois marié, on laisse agir la nature (...).”10 Had Malthus been able to read these lines, he, obviously, would have nodded approvingly. Although Notestein does not explicitly refer to Malthus or Landry, we must assume that he knew the work of his famous predecessors. Why, then, did he not mention them?

There is one obvious explanation for the fact that a European father of the transition theory did take the marriage restriction into consideration, whereas

10. Adolphe Landry, La Révolution Démographique. Études et essais sur les problèmes de la population (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1934), 44. Translation: “(...) The way to reach this goal was to practice celibacy, or to postpone marriage. Once married, people let nature have its way (...).”
his American colleague did not pay attention to it. To all contemporary witnesses marriage restriction was strikingly absent in the colonial and early national period of the history of the United States. During the 19th and 20th centuries this was less the case, but, despite cycles in nuptiality and differences between male and female marriage patterns, the need to wait for niches in order to establish a new household was clearly rather a European than an American obsession.\(^{11}\) Looked at in this way, one might argue that it is not remarkable at all that Frank Notestein did not discuss preventive checks in his publications.

Also, we have to acknowledge that Notestein’s 1945 paper was focused on population growth rather than on population control. He starts his argument by stating that “the world’s population has been growing at a rapid and accelerating pace during the last three centuries”. The exceptional position of Europe is certainly mentioned, but Notestein does this in an other way than one would have expected. He points to the fact that “all sections of the world have participated in this growth, but it has been particularly marked in Europe”. Further on, when the author discusses the pre-transitional situation, he refers to it as the demographic type of “high growth potential”, characterized by high and variable mortality and high and invariable fertility. “In these populations”, Notestein remarks, “rapid growth is to be expected just as soon as technical developments make possible a decline in mortality”.\(^{12}\) Again, marriage restriction is neither part of the pre-transitional equilibrium, nor of the set of possible reactions to growth.

It is even more surprising to find no references to transition theory in an article dealing with general population developments that is published in 1965. During the 1960s, demographic transition theory was thriving, although perhaps more in the political than in the scientific world. Could John Hajnal really have been unaware of Frank Notestein’s work? This is the more unbelievable when one reads the first footnote in his 1983 paper. There, he mentions his gratitude to the many people at the Office of Population Studies in Princeton where he wrote the paper in question. We immediately note two facts. First, Notestein has for many years been director of this famous institution. Secondly, during Hajnal’s stay in Princeton, Ansley Coale directed the European Fertility Project. Within this project many monographs and articles were written on the European fertility decline. Although one might argue about many characteristics of the EFP, the impact of transition theory on this project is obvious. Hajnal, therefore, was writing his article in an environment where the air was filled with the transition theory. Despite all that, only once, in his Conclusion, Hajnal implicitly touches upon the subject. There he asks himself whether Malthus was right “in


\(^{12}\) Notestein, “Population. The Long View”, respectively 38-39 and 41.
thinking that late marriage in Europe resulted in lower birth rates, and hence lower death rates, than obtained among non-European populations?". At this point, the author at least mentions birth rates and death rates. If for no other reason else, the status of the two authors we are discussing here prevents us from suggesting ignorance of each others work or topics. There must be a more plausible answer to the question we asked ourselves at the beginning of this section. The most convincing explanation for Notestein’s lack of interest in the European nuptiality valve is this: when one takes “the long view”, attention will be directed at the truly revolutionary developments of the 19th and 20th centuries. After the relative stability of centuries, the sudden population growth that set in once mortality declined, and the following restriction of fertility within marriages were more interesting than pre-industrial homeostasis. Katherine Lynch refers to this when she writes: “Some confusion may have arisen over the years because the European Marriage Pattern, considered purely in its demographic effects, has been identified with the ‘natural fertility’ phase of the European demographic history.” This would imply that the founders of the transition theory considered the influence of nuptiality to have vanished by the time the transition became interesting.

We also have to take into account that Notestein was strongly policy oriented. As a matter of fact, the very reason why his 1945 publication is often regarded as the starting point of the transition theory rather than Warren S. Thompson’s “Population” from 1929, is the attention in the wake of the second world war for governmental and scientific planning at an international level to cope with the problems in developing and underdeveloped countries (Food for the World!). Serious demographers in the 1940s and 1950s obviously knew that marriage restriction was an unknown phenomenon in those parts of the world and, therefore, concentrated on the direct fertility decisions.

The same reason might explain why Hajnal did not write about the transition theory. Maybe he, too, thought of the prudential restraints on marriages as a mere footnote in population history. In his voluminous overview of demographic transition theory, Jean-Claude Chesnais, for instance, also did not pay much attention to marriage restriction, because “this model of nuptiality appears to have constituted an important historical exception, temporally and spatially

restricted to a fairly limited area”. In this view, marriage restriction is merely a subvariable within the first phase of the transition, and, on top of that, applicable in only a small part of the world.

If indeed modesty was the reason why Hajnal did not give his pattern an explicit place in the grand scheme of the transition theory, it is now time to look back and ask ourselves whether this modesty was really called for. And if indeed Notestein was just taking the long view and was looking for applicability, this too asks for an evaluation of his views. In other words, is the European marriage pattern merely a footnote in demographic history, whereas transition theory forms the core, or is nuptiality of crucial importance for our understanding of the historical developments in mortality and fertility? To answer this question, in the next section we will try to find out how transition and nuptiality valve fit together.

**Transition and nuptiality**

The best way, in our view, to find out how demographic transition and marriage restriction can be linked, is to reconstruct the ideas of the pioneers of these theories as much as possible from the original papers. Historiography may have added interpretation and new empirical information that changed the original views. In 1945 Frank Notestein produced a very straightforward argument. He started by stating that population had been growing very rapidly in the past three centuries. Prior to 1900, growth was particularly marked in Europe and the areas populated by European descendants. After 1900, however, there was a division between the fast growing European regions, where growth rates slowed down, and the other parts of the world, where an acceleration of growth started. In Notestein’s eyes, the reason for the initial growth was clear cut. It originated from a decline in mortality.

Notestein then explained why fertility did not decline as rapidly as mortality did. Mortality decline resulted from agricultural and industrial innovations, as well as from medical and sanitary advances. Also “the reduction of mortality is a universally acceptable goal and faces no substantial social obstacles”. For fertility, the story is completely different. Pre-modern societies had to have very high fertility levels in order to survive given their high mortality rates. Many methods were used in order to reach this goal: “Their religious doctrines, moral codes, laws, education, community customs, marriage habits, and family organizations are all focused toward maintaining high fertility”. Obviously, it took

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time to adapt these habits and attitudes to the new mortality regime. According to Notestein, only in the emerging urban industrial living conditions of 19th century Europe, the individualism necessary for the acceptance of modern birth control developed.

We find a very condensed description of the demographic transition theory in an earlier paper by Frank Notestein:

> Few social trends in the modern period have been as universal and persistent as the decline of mortality and fertility. Coming as a result of agricultural, industrial, and technical evolution, the declines were established first in mortality, and only after a considerable interval in fertility. The result of the lagging transition from high to low vital rates has been a wave of population growth, moving across Europe with the current of modernization.\(^{21}\)

Clearly, Notestein’s view of the population development in Europe in the past three centuries focuses on two variables, fertility and mortality. He only refers implicitly to the influences of nuptiality when he describes the methods used to keep fertility high in the pre-modern era. Still, the possible effect of nuptiality decisions on fertility are familiar to him. He pointed to them as a short run reaction to the crisis of the 1930s: “Declines in fertility followed quickly on sharp declines in marriages as the depression deepened. (...) As the revival came, marriages rose, followed by rises in first and second births”.\(^{22}\)

John Hajnal has a completely different way of depicting population development in Europe. Obviously, he stresses the importance of the marriage pattern as the principal agent. We already cited the only place where birth rates and death rates were mentioned. Hajnal even presents an example of the effects of nuptiality on birth and death rates. There, he shows how the non-European marriage customs in three 18th century Hungarian villages resulted in birth rates that were 15 to 20 per 1,000 higher than they were in that world famous French village of Crulai. The same goes for death rates. Here, the difference was 10 to 15 per 1,000.\(^{23}\)

At this point, one realizes that Frank Notestein should have noticed that even in 17th and 18th Europe birth rates were always considerably lower than the rates in the contemporary developing countries he described. From this he could have learned that the “marriage customs” he mentioned not only saw to it that populations survived under a high death rate regime. They, obviously, could also


\(^{22}\) Notestein e.a., *The Future Population*, 28.

\(^{23}\) Hajnal, “European marriage patterns”, 131.
be used to keep fertility below maximal. Again, his Adolphe Landry already mentioned this fact: in the view of Notestein’s French predecessor the birth rate “s’établira au-dessous de ce maximum (physiologique) en raison, notamment, des coutumes concernant la durée de l’allaitement, et tout d’abord l’âge du mariage (...).” 24

This low pressure balance, then, is the major distinction between “European” and non-European societies that Hajnal refers to. It is also the reason why we disagree with Notestein’s statement that:

(...) the modern nations of the West have imposed on the world’s non-industrial peoples that part of their culture which reduces mortality sufficiently to permit growth, while withholding, or at least failing to foster, those changes in the social setting out of which the reduction of fertility eventually developed in the West. 25

The first and foremost condition to reduce fertility in European countries was something they could not possibly export to other continents. It was the very fact that they already had a long tradition of population control through nuptiality.

There is still another reason why it is not easy to bring transition theory and marriage restriction together. The names already indicate that we are dealing with a static (pattern) on the one hand and a dynamic (transition) way of thinking on the other. Hajnal’s description of the European pattern is essentially a static one. A society either has or has not the custom of postponing marriage and fostering lifelong celibacy. Contrary to that, Notestein explicitly uses a dynamic model with the widely known three successive stages. It follows that one has to build a static concept into a dynamic model. Unless, of course, one just releases the link with mortality. Basically, this is the solution used by Chesnais. He introduces the concept of a reproductive transition and distinguishes between the first stage characterized by marriage restriction and the second in which modern birth control within marriage is used. 26

At this point we would like to introduce the ideas of two demographers that might help us to bring together the two approaches to demography we deal with here. They already studied this theme before Hajnal, and in one case even before Notestein published their famous papers. First, the views of the already cited Adolphe Landry will be presented. The most striking element of his demographic views is that he combines a three stage “modernization” theory with the

24. Landry, La Révolution Démographique, 45-46. (translated: the birth rate “will establish itself below the physiological maximum mainly because of the breastfeeding customs, and, most of all, because of the age at marriage”).


restriction of marriages. The first of these stages was a demographic regime that Landry labelled as *primitif*. No voluntary control of births in whatever way was practised in this period. In some societies this stage was replaced directly by a *régime contemporain* using effective birth control within marriage, but often the transition was eased by an intermediary stage, in which marriage restriction was the rule. Landry informs us that this was, for instance, the case in 18th century France. Tempting as it may be, it would be difficult to link Landry’s three stages with those of the demographic transition. As far as Europe is concerned, the *régime intermédiaire* is to be located already in the first stage of the classical transition model. Also, mortality enters this picture only implicitly when Landry remarks that the introduction of the contemporary regime is necessary because celibacy and postponed marriages did only have limited results. In other words, the massive decline in death rates of the 19th century could not be explained by marriage restriction alone. In 1954 the Dutch sociologist E.W. Hofstee published an article that is well-known in the Netherlands, but, for obvious reasons, did not reach an international audience. Still, it is worthwhile to give this paper a closer look, because, even in the 1990s, some of the ideas in it sound rather modern. It is possible to argue that this very article could have had the impact of Hajnal’s paper, had it been written in English. Hofstee’s point of departure is the question how to explain the regional differences in birth rates in the Netherlands around 1850. After presenting a quantitative overview of demographic characteristics of the Dutch provinces, his conclusion is that it are the variance in age at marriage and in marriage frequency that determine the variance in birth rates.

Hofstee then explicitly refers to transition theory by stating that “one of the most viable hypotheses in demography” asserts that there is “a certain relation” between the development of birth rates and death rates. In only a few sentences the author depicts the transition from a high level balance between births and deaths to a low level balance, including the intermediate phase of population increase. All this is geared at re-establishing the equilibrium between population and resources. Does this mean, Hofstee then asks himself, that the regional dif-

29. Hofstee, “Regionale verscheidenheid”, 76. (literally: “Tot één der meest gangbare hypothesen in de demografie behoort die aangaande het bestaan van een zeker verband tussen de ontwikkeling van het geboortevan het sterftecijfer.”).
ferences in Dutch birth rates in 1850 can be reduced to differences in death rates? The answer he gives is an unequivocal no.

His alternative explanation sounds familiar to us and goes like this. In the 18th century, Dutch fertility was determined by the so-called classical agrarian-crafts reproductive pattern. Basic to this pattern was that marriage was only possible if and when one had acquired a livelihood adequate to one’s occupation and social status. To illustrate this system, Hofstee gives the example of a farmer who has more than one son. Only one of the farmers sons would marry, often only when the farmer himself retired. The other brothers and sisters remained celibate and lived their lives in the household of the married brother. In this way, the balance between population and resources was kept, without using contraception within marriage. One must assume, Hofstee then adds, that the same applies in the pre-industrial city. Artisans used the same instrument to regulate their number and even (a limited number of) laborers could depend on their contract of employment.30

The resemblance with Hajnal’s pattern is clear. Even the geographical scope seems to be the same, although Hofstee does not make this a crucial element in his argument. He does mention, however, the fact that this pattern dominated population development in Western-Europe until the 18th century. We immediately note that this author in 1954 already made a distinction between Eastern and Western Europe.31

According to Hofstee, the existence of the pattern described here presupposed many conditions. First, strong family ties were necessary and a rather patriarchic way of thinking. Individual members of the family had to subordinate their personal ambitions and feelings to the collective well being. Next, employers had to feel responsible for the fate of those who worked for them and guarantee stability of employment. Psychologically the agrarian-crafts reproductive pattern could only be maintained by way of repressing sexual emotions to the degree that the organisation of society was often totally geared to this goal.

The emergence of modern capitalism, Hofstee goes on, obviously meant that the system described here had to disappear. Labor relations in factories were totally different from what farmers and their servants were accustomed to, and the new individualism could not be reconciled with living-in siblings.

30. There probably are contemporary accounts of this marriage pattern in every country where it was practised. For the Netherlands we have the paper of a village doctor in the province of North-Brabant, who, already in 1925, described the Hajnal marriage pattern in detail: P.A. Barentsen, “Het gezinsleven in het oosten van Noord-Brabant”, in: G. van den Brink, A. van der Veen and A. van der Woude (eds), Werk, kerk en bed in Brabant. Demografische ontwikkelingen in oostelijk Noord-Brabant, 1700-1920 (’s-Hertogenbosch: Stichting brg, 1989). 17-32.
31. The author refers to the German demographer G. Mackenroth to underline this fact.
Again, some 40 years later Wally Seccombe pointed at the same effect from capitalism:

Once the wage form was fully individuated (as a payment to a person who was entitled to spend it as he or she saw fit), there was nothing to prevent proletarian youth from leaving home as soon as they secured full-time jobs, proceeding to marry whomever they wished whenever they could afford to. In effect, capitalism severed the family cycle at the point of transition from family of birth to procreative family.\(^{32}\)

As a consequence, marriage restriction faded away and more couples started to marry and did so earlier in life. We now enter the *proletarian intermediate phase*, as Hofstee called it. It was the phase in which crude birth rates rose to unknown levels because of the fact that the unlimited fertility within marriage was maintained whereas nuptiality was unchecked. The resulting population pressure, however, saw to it that after a while modern birth restriction was accepted.

For Hofstee, this concludes his search for an explanation of the regional variation in birth rates he found in the Netherlands in the middle of the 19th century. There were marked differences within the country with respect to economic development and this resulted in the several co-existing stages of demographic development. In his view, the key determinant of these differences was reproduction rather than mortality, although Hofstee does not reject that “most viable hypothesis in demography”. In his own words: “The decline of mortality certainly stimulates birth control, but other variables can strengthen, weaken or cancel this influence”.\(^{33}\) Further on, it is specified that religion and mentality are these other variables. Without explicitly stating it, Hofstee was basically adding nuptiality to the classical transition theory. He, too, acknowledged the empirical finding that in most countries mortality declined first, followed after a certain time lag by fertility decline, but he refused to see this as an automatic response. Notestein simply stated that “no substantial part of the modern population growth has come from a rise in fertility”\(^{34}\) and Chesnais literally only deals with the possibility of fertility increase in a footnote. The increase is attributed to improvements in income and hygiene rather than to changes in nuptiality.\(^{35}\) There is a marked contrast here with Hofstee’s views. By way of introducing his intermediate proletarian phase, he opened the opportunity for fertility to play a part in 19th century population growth. In his


\(^{33}\) Hofstee, “Regionale verscheidenheid”, 94.

\(^{34}\) Notestein, “Population. The long View”, 39.

\(^{35}\) Chesnais, *The DemographicTransition*, 27, footnote 1.
opinion, we have to avoid economic determinism and we cannot simply neglect the influences of mentality and attitudes. Apart from economic impulses, nuptiality is also regulated through these variables in the pre-transition period. In this way fertility was kept below the biological maximum level. They also determine the level of fertility in the third phase of the transition, by either keeping the inadequate nuptiality restriction active (and thus fertility “uneconomically” high) or by replacing the old method of population regulation by modern birth control.36

Clearly, Hofstee’s way of thinking not only adds a variable to the demographic transition theory, but it offers the possibility to dynamize the essentially static pattern of Hajnal. Landry already made a step in this direction, but one has to be aware of the fact that it is rather complicated to link the views of the two authors. The French demographer refers to the period of marriage restriction as the intermediate phase, whereas for Hofstee, during the period he calls the intermediate phase, marriage restriction disappears. As said before, it disappears for some parts of the population, especially for proletarianized laborers. This, then, is another of Hofstee’s contributions to our understanding of the transition. He does not believe in one general process applicable to all people, but in stead points at the enormous regional and social variance that is possible within the same macro development. Again, this is a point of view that does not surprise the reader in 1999. In 1954, however, Hofstee’s warning was absolutely to the point.

The heritage
Now that we just entered the new millennium, many accomplishments of the 20th century are once again examined. What part of our heritage is worthwhile taking with us? Although, obviously, for an historian, these “historic” thresholds have no real meaning, this time is as good as any to make a few evaluative comments on the significance of the demographic transition theory and the European marriage pattern, now that many decades of research tested them. First of all, we have to establish that there is such an enormous amount of critical comment on both theories, that one wonders why we are still discussing them at all. We will briefly look at these critics and then try to assess what remains valuable in the theories in question.

In his monumental volume on fertility decline in Britain Simon Szreter summarized all past critics and, on top of that, formulated himself a massive

attack on demographic transition theory. Therefore, we decided to take him as
our guide.\textsuperscript{37} Szreter starts by stating that even F.W. Notestein and K. Davis, the
two leading exponents of the concept of demographic transition, acknowledged
in the 1950s that the model they formulated in 1944 was not the testable model
they once thought it to be. The economic determinism was relinquished and
even the centerpiece of transition theory, the chronology was dropped: in some
cases, a decline in fertility could precede a decline in mortality. The founding
fathers of the transition theory had to change their original ideas because they
were confronted with a growing amount of contemporary and historical studies
showing the existence of a wide range of responses to economic change. Fertility
and mortality, it was argued, still could act as a way of responding to the new cir-
cumstances of the 19th century, but there were alternatives too: nuptiality and
migration. All four, separate or in a specific combination, could react to economic
modernization.

If this was indeed the case, why then was demographic transition theory
still kept alive in the 1950s and 1960s? Szreter argues that Talcott Parsons’s
structural functionalism played a major role in this. Looking at the similarities
between the theories, the reason for this is obvious. Both argue that the process
of industrialization replaced the traditional extended families by nuclear families
who adhered to an individualist and rational value system. Also, both scientific
models regarded the family as the most important institution used to socialize
the members of a society. The modernization ideas, stemming from the Parson-
ian school, were reflected in the division in traditional and modern demograph-
ic regimes that is characteristic of the transition theory.

In the European Fertility Project (\textit{efp}) at Princeton University, Ansley
Coale stimulated the further quest for general causes of fertility decline. Again,
the background was that these findings could be used in developing countries.
The impact of this project had an enormous effect on demographic historians
and stressed the dominance of modernization theories well into the 1980s. Or,
as Szreter puts it himself: “The Princeton Project has thus succeeded in grant-
ing to the idea of demographic transition a scientific life after death.”\textsuperscript{38} This
was mainly brought about by introducing concepts such as “natural fertility”
versus “controlled fertility”. By focusing on the moment when age-specific fer-
tility is deliberately altered, again the transition from a traditional to a modern
society is described. Szreter protests against the “linear, neo-evolutionary,
modernization framework of thinking” still present in the work by the \textit{efp}
followers. As an example, he points to Susan Watkins. When she studies the
emerging national homogeneity, she simply replaces “modernization” by this
new concept. Szreter observes that

\textsuperscript{38} Szreter, \textit{Fertility, class and gender}, 25.
Watkins does not offer an approach which can escape from the conceptual shackles of the dichotomous neo-evolutionism of modernization, which has throughout animated the Princeton Project’s notion of a demographic transition from natural to controlled fertility.\textsuperscript{39}

An important contribution to historical demography was made by the anthropological approach, Szreter goes on, mainly by its attention for local and regional political and institutional contexts. Family reconstitution studies clearly showed the variation existing within “traditional” societies, while so called modernized nations also showed important variations within their boundaries. Thus, the relationship between economic growth and demographic variables as suggested by the transition school, appeared to be much more complicated. One of the most important neglected topics was the influence of power relations and, thus, of socio-political conflict. Anthropology introduced the respect for context together with a micro-demographic approach.

Caldwell is a well-known representative of the anthropological approach. He introduced the concept of “inter-generational wealth flows”. In his, essentially economic, theory he points to the fact that fertility decline only starts when parents lose the capacity to get hold of their children’s income. This change is brought about, however, by a socio-cultural variable, namely mass education. What happens is this: parents send their children to school in order to foster their earning capacity, but as a consequence better educated children have a better bargaining position against their parents. At this point Szreter once again raises his finger. He concludes that Caldwell does not restate transition theory at all,\textsuperscript{40} but just replaces “modernization” by “Westernization” (national education system). The problem is, according to Szreter, that people still want to reduce the complexity of fertility decline to a single specific cause.

With regard to an other alternative to transition theory, the micro-economic approach, Szreter finds it to have the same flaw as all economic modelling approaches, namely the conviction that human beings act completely rationally. He reminds us of the concept of “procedural” rationality, in which it is accepted that most individuals do not have all relevant information and different individuals have different information channels. We simply need to know exactly in what circumstances they made their decisions. Additionally, we must include the notion of the importance of the internal power relations (between sexes and generations) and of national contexts as present in national laws. Only given and within these circumstances economic rationality can play its (secondary!) role. So, “the emphasis on the importance of understanding local contexts and socio-political institutions” challenges the classical transition concept.

\textsuperscript{39} Szreter, \textit{Fertility, class and gender}, 30.
To be sure, this rejection of transition theory is very convincing. The problem, however, seems to be that Szreter is fighting a theory no one is defending anymore. As he stated himself, even the authors who founded the theory in later years acknowledged its limitations and adjusted to the new empirical findings. Those who still adhere to transition theory do this in a very detached way. Jean-Claude Chesnais is an excellent example of these scholars. He clearly states that the theory cannot be used to predict the pattern of demographic development in a particular country. Still,

its historic rooting, in our view, is one of its strengths, and careful consideration reveals that its original definition is sufficiently open to offer a flexible frame of reference. Moreover, it has the advantage of being the only interpretative schema which reflects a synthetic and coherent view of contemporary demographic changes.41

There is no lack of critics of Hajnal’s European marriage pattern either. We will only select a few representatives. George Alter points to the fact that one would have expected the pattern to disappear much earlier. The problem, Alter writes, is that

we find low nuptiality in periods, places, and groups where the Malthusian constraints do not seem to apply. Thus, marriage was not earlier in large cities than in rural areas (...). Nor did members of the bourgeoisie use their wealth to marry their children at earlier ages. (...). Indeed, the very persistence of late marriage throughout nineteenth-century Europe is a challenge to the Hajnal thesis.42

There are other questions to be answered too. For instance, does the contrast between continents and countries remain the same when we differentiate among social or occupational subpopulations? Possibly, the differences in the marriage system we find simply result from a structurally different composition of the population. It may well be that the national averages of age at marriage and proportion never-married confirm Hajnal’s theory, whereas at the same time we find similar behavior for subpopulations with the same characteristics. In that case, one might argue that, essentially, there is no difference in marriage patterns.

42. George Alter, “Introduction”, *Journal of Family History* 16 (1991). The answer to Alter’s question is provided in the same issue by Katherine Lynch: “As I have suggested, however, the European Marriage Pattern should also be understood as a system of values about marriage and the household, one that survived well into the period of widespread fertility control within marriages.” See Lynch, “The European Marriage Pattern”, citation on p. 92.
Also, is it wise to maintain Hajnal’s strict division between Western Europe and “the rest of the world” in the light of more recent information? Outside Europe we find a much more complicated and differentiated reality than Hajnal sketched. In his 1983 article, Hajnal still explicitly treated India, China and Eastern Europe as being similar in marriage patterns. Recent publications, however, informed us of a nuptiality valve existing in India.\textsuperscript{43} The same might be true in other parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America. As for Japan, Osamu Saito concluded that “the population history before the period of transition can be identified as a regime which was distinct from both the north-west European and the Chinese systems”.\textsuperscript{44} Closer to the geographic core of the European marriage pattern, we certainly also have to study the situation in the “transitional” areas such as Southern Europe. In 1983 P. Laslett tried to enrich Hajnal’s ideas by suggesting that Europe has to be subdivided in four regions: west and north-west, west/central or middle, Mediterranean and east.\textsuperscript{45} Mediterranean couples, in his view, differed clearly from their Western European counterparts by not (necessarily) forming an independent household immediately after marriage. Also, he argued that female age at marriage was low in Southern European countries. As a consequence, there existed a wide age gap between ages at marriage for brides and grooms. Also, in Mediterranean countries permanent celibacy according to Laslett was low.\textsuperscript{46}

Whatever the value of this regionalization may be, the fact remains that many critics of the Hajnal hypothesis do not agree with the crude division of


\textsuperscript{44} Osamu Saito, “Historical demography: achievements and prospects”, \textit{Population Studies} 50 (1996), 537-553.

\textsuperscript{45} Peter Laslett, “Family and household as work group and kin group: areas of traditional Europe compared”, in: R. Wall, J. Robin and P. Laslett (eds), \textit{Family forms in historic Europe} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 513-564. Here we find an unexpected link with transition theory, for Notestein has been dividing Europe in homogeneous regions too. The reason behind this closely resembles the motives for Hajnal and Laslett, for also Notestein realizes: “Europe, however, is far from being a homogeneous entity, and population changes in Europe as a whole are the blending of widely divergent changes in its component regions and nations. Many stages of economic and cultural development are represented by the countries of Europe.” Notestein uses demographic characteristics to select six regions. They are 1-United Kingdom and Ireland, 2-Northern Europe, 3-West-Central Europe, 4-Southern Europe, 5-Eastern Europe and 6-the USSR. See: Frank W. Notestein a.o., \textit{The Future Population of Europe and the Soviet Union. Population Projections 1940-1970} (Geneva: League of Nations, 1944), 48 (citation) and 53.

\textsuperscript{46} D. Kertzer and D. Hogan looked into the characteristics of this so-called Mediterranean marriage pattern – although they used only data from one city – and found only the first difference with the northwest European pattern to exist. Age at marriage, age gap and celibacy appeared to be consistent with the “European” marriage pattern. See: David Kertzer and D. Hogan, “Reflections on the European marriage: Sharecropping and proletarianization in Casalecchio, Italy, 1861-1921”, \textit{Journal of Family History} 16 (1991), 31-45.
Europe in two distinct parts. Still, other authors have a more subtle view of this question. After studying family structure and the European pattern in Bulgaria, Maria Todorova, for instance, stated that although there certainly is interregional variation within the Balkan area, as well as between the Balkan and other East European regions, the differences between Western Europe and Eastern Europe remain. She does not want to dispute this fact, but rather warns against an overemphasis of these differences, because this results in oversimplification.47

On the surface, the conclusion from the preceding pages might be that by now the only two links between transition theory and the marriage pattern hypothesis are that they are both heavily criticized, and that they, therefore, both are relics of the past. This, however, would be a serious mistake, because both theories still have an enormous impact on historical demographic studies. In fact, they started a second life recently. Again it is a Dutch demographer that must be mentioned here, be it that this time both the author and his work are well known internationally. In 1987 Dirk J. van de Kaa published an eloquently formulated statement on the demographic situation in Europe by the end of the 20th century. As a result he brought marriage patterns and demographic transition together in one model.48

In Van de Kaa’s eyes, the classical demographic transition ended in 1930, because at that moment both birth and death rates were already at a low level. Then, after an intermediate period of the Second World War and the following baby boom, Europe’s further demographic development started in 1965. Van de Kaa calls the developments after 1965 the “second demographic transition” and, consequently, refers to the 1800-1930 era as the first demographic transition. The major distinguishing characteristic is population growth. The first transition ended in a zero population growth, whereas during the second transition a long-term population decline is predicted and in many cases already visible. The differential demographic outcome is the result of, among other things, changing norms and values, Van de Kaa argues. In his view, the first transition was “altruistic” in the sense that changes in demographic behavior were all geared to the well-being of family and offspring. The mentality of the second transition is “individualistic”. After 1965, it is not the family as such, but the right to self-fulfillment of individual members of the family that is most important. From there on, Van de Kaa discerns four related shifts, which, in his view, can be recognized in every European country, although they follow different time paths. The second transition to low fertility involves:

1. Shift from the *golden age of marriage* to the *dawn of cohabitation*;
2. Shift from the era of the *king-child with parents* to that of the *king-pair with a child*;
3. Shift from *preventive contraception* to *self-fulfilling conception*;
4. Shift from *uniform* to *pluralistic families and households*.49

The first conclusion we can draw both from Van de Kaa’s statement itself, and from the fact that his view is now regularly propagated in the demographic journals, is that, obviously, the demographic transition is accepted as a valid theory. At the moment when the classical theory ends, it is even offered a second life. The “third” phase from the original transition characterized by a new, low balance between births and deaths, is not treated as the end of an era anymore, but rather as the starting point of a new period in history. Also, Van de Kaa explicitly introduces nuptiality as the most important element in the second demographic transition, but “family formation” may be the better term in the new situation, where in many cases cohabitation substitutes for marriage. Lastly, Van de Kaa expects all European countries to follow a “standard sequence” and thus joins with the heritage of the classical transition theory.

Another surprising element in Van de Kaa’s paper is the fact that he, too, engages in a regionalization of Europe. His results bear a remarkable resemblance to Hajnal’s and Laslett’s efforts in this direction. In 1987 he discerns four regions. In Northern and Western Europe the second demographic transition is well advanced. In the countries of Southern Europe, it is suggested that they have began the new transition, although they are certainly late in comparison to the first region. In Eastern Europe, the author finds a transition in a different shape. Lastly, the fourth group is a remainder consisting of a number of atypical countries that have not completed the first transition. Van de Kaa refers to countries like Albania, Ireland and Iceland. The first three groups, though, provide a familiar picture. There appears to be a clear distinction between the western and the eastern part of Europe, and within the western part we have to allow for a special position for the Southern European countries.

From this description it follows that transition and marriage patterns indeed seem to blend into one general demographic model. Again we witness a development that all countries will go through, again this is done in stages, and again the parts of Europe are in different stages of the process. All this reminds us of the transition theory. The motor of the second transition, however, is nuptiality rather than fertility and mortality. And again the distinction between East and West remains.

We end this section by providing a few empirical data on the differences mentioned above. First, the crude marriage rates are presented. For the sake of

comparison we selected four Eastern European countries and eleven other countries.\textsuperscript{50} As a result we have to make a correction on Hajnal’s idea that the pattern slowly disappeared after 1945. As it is, the differences between the eastern and the other parts of Europe are clearly visible until 1990. What we find is that populations in Eastern European are more inclined to marry than their Western European counterparts. Only when the baby boom generation reached marital age, the Eastern European rates were almost reached by the other countries.

The Hajnal marriage pattern was not only characterized by a relatively low proportion of people marrying. Age at marriage was important too. Do Eastern European couples still marry at a significantly younger age? The differences are not as striking anymore as they used to be, but even in the years 1990-1993 the mean age at first marriage for Eastern European women is clearly lower (22.0) when compared to their Northern (27.2), Western (25.6) and even Southern (24.9) counterparts.\textsuperscript{51} Obviously, the line Hajnal drew across Europe was more tenacious than that other demarcation line in approximately the same position.

\textsuperscript{50} The countries involved are: (east) Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Romania; (rest) Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

\textsuperscript{51} Council of Europe, \textit{Recent Demographic Developments in Europe} Southern Europe: Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.
Surprising as it may be, after 1989 the demographic differences between west and east still stand.

Looking back at the things we found, one may conclude that the history of the relationship between the European marriage pattern and the demographic transition theory basically is a simple story. Once upon a time a man named John Hajnal drew a line on the map of Europe between the cities of Trieste and Leningrad, and defined different marriage patterns at the two sides of this line. For reasons that we can not trace anymore, Hajnal chose not to combine his ideas on nuptiality with the transition theory. Given the dominant position of the transition theory in those day, this is a surprising fact, the more so because at least two of Hajnal’s predecessors had already paved the way towards a meaningful integration.

Initially, the founding fathers of transition theory from their part also neglected the role of nuptiality in the demographic history of the past centuries. Again, there were many reasons why one would have expected the contrary. Still, by the time the second demographic transition was introduced, this situation changed drastically. From the very start, marriage and marriage patterns were the core of this new transition. This refers to the theoretical part of the story. The empirical data on marriage behavior lead to a surprising conclusion. After all is said and done, the line drawn in 1965 still stands, even though nowadays Leningrad is called St. Petersburg again.
West of the Hajnal line: North-Western Europe

François Hendrickx
1 Introduction

In history, it has been demonstrated time and again that nothing is stronger than an idea whose time has come. In historical demography, in the late 1960s, the idea whose time had come (although in the company of a few others) was the thought that “the marriage pattern of most of Europe as it existed for at least two centuries up to 1940 was (...) unique or almost unique in the world”.\(^1\) With these words, John Hajnal sketched in one sentence what soon became known as the European or Western European Marriage Pattern. He extended this view with regard to family formation and two European types of family formation systems in his 1982/1983 essay.\(^2\) These two articles have initiated an avalanche of research into a set of demographic rules\(^3\) by which seemingly the entire European population west of the line St. Petersburg – Triest had lived at least since 1700.\(^4\) We will first concentrate on the European Marriage Pattern (Hajnal 1965) and deal with the household formation systems (Hajnal 1982/1983) later.

Whether the notion of a distinct European marriage pattern was as new in 1965 as is now sometimes assumed, is the subject of other contributions to this volume,\(^5\) as is the more general question whether or not this notion was indeed as European as Hajnal believed it to be.\(^6\) Hajnal’s model of the balance between population and resources is of course directly derived from Malthus.\(^7\) It has generated research in two different, but closely connected directions. Firstly, there has been the study of the development of marriage and fertility per se. Secondly, it initiated a body of research focusing on family, household and life cycle.\(^8\) Moreover, the European Marriage pattern plays an essential role in research dealing with proto-industrialization\(^9\) and with the connection between inheritance patterns and the family cycle and the life cycle in the past.\(^10\)

3. The notion of “rules” is used here in the weakest possible sense and does not imply any rigid or prescribed guide for conduct or action, but rather a tentative result of inductive reasoning.
5. See the contributions of Engelen and Fertig to this volume.
6. See this volume, the contribution of Engelen and Wolf.
This contribution will focus on an overview of the research Hajnal’s work has generated with regard to Northwest Europe and on questions and problems that have arisen in its wake. It will be shown that Hajnal’s ideas on the European Marriage Pattern and even more so those concerning the two types of household formation systems have given rise to a large and diverse body of research, both in terms of focus and of outcomes. But it will also be demonstrated that although the studies carried out to date have greatly added to our understanding of population processes, a number of questions touching upon the very core of the European Marriage Pattern and household formation systems have so far remained unanswered.

2. The European Marriage Pattern in Northwestern Europe

2.1 General features

Northwestern Europe, roughly consisting of Ireland, England and Wales, Scotland, the northern part of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and Scandinavia, is considered to be the heartland of the European Marriage Pattern. In this area, “historical studies of modern, early modern, and even medieval Europe consistently find ages at marriage and proportions never marrying much higher than those observed in other culture areas”.

New studies, published since 1965, have generally shown that indeed marriage patterns in northwestern Europe were characterized by late ages at marriage and low proportions of never-married individuals. These patterns have been attributed to the presence of a marriage system that is distinct from the traditional marriage systems found in other parts of Western Europe.

8. This line of research was of course equally encouraged by the first appearance, also in 1965, of Laslett’s The World We Have Lost (Peter Laslett, The world we have lost (London: Menthuen, 1965)), dealing with the question whether or not complex households and stem families had been the norm in Europe before the end of the Ancien Regime. See also: Peter Laslett, Richard Wall (eds), Household and Family in Past Time. Comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group over the last three centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and colonial North America, with further materials from Western Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Michael Anderson, Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914 (London: Macmillan Press, 1980); Wall, Robin, Laslett (eds), Family Forms in Historic Europe.


Europe were what Hajnal suspected them to be. Up until the end of the nineteenth century, average ages at first marriage were almost consistently over 23 years for women and over 25 years for men. Proportions never married, however, seem to have varied much more and sometimes fell as low as five per cent, thus approaching the celibacy shares of areas bordering the region of the European Marriage Pattern in the East.

A first attempt to summarize the state of affairs in the “European demographic system” before 1820 was undertaken by Flinn. Based on his data, an impression of ages at first marriage for women is given in figure 1.


Although later studies or different periodizations have shown secular trends which are different from Flinn’s, the general point of this contribution is not essentially touched by the new results. ¹⁵ The first thing we notice is that in all countries, the national averages of women’s age at first marriage are well over the boundary defined by Hajnal (that is, age at first marriage at 23 or over). But within some countries, the bandwidth between the highest and lowest regional averages is such that some regional or local averages occasionally fall below 23. This is particularly the case in France, where the range between lowest and highest local averages is the largest of all countries until the end of the eighteenth century. The range becomes smaller as a whole through the period under observation, but it is particularly the part below the national average that moves upward rapidly, while the maximum local average remains comparatively high throughout the period.

In all countries except England, the national average is higher at the end of the period under consideration than it was at the beginning. Moreover, in France and Germany, and to a lesser extent Belgium, the secular trend in the national average is clearly upwards. Only England shows a clear fall in the average age at first marriage during the period 1790-1820, a trend which has been confirmed by recent research, be it in a strongly revised form. ¹⁶ It is, of course, no coincidence that the fall in the age at marriage for both men and women in England coincides with structural changes in the English economy since the first decades of the eighteenth century (reformation of agriculture and the beginning

¹⁴. The data in figure 1 are based on Flinn, *European Demographic System*, 124-127. For every country and every period, the minimum and maximum regional average ages at marriage and the weighted national average (as calculated by Flinn) are represented. Flinn calculated the national averages as a simple mean of the available local studies, and he weighed the national averages only by the number of communities taken up in individual studies. The values for Belgium, 1780-1820, are new calculations and are based on Flanders only. For lack of any substantial amount of studies over the period prior to the nineteenth century, Ireland and the Netherlands are missing from this graph.

¹⁵. For instance, Wrigley and Schofield found a different trend for England (see note 16). In Sweden, the trend which Flinn found for Scandinavia is generally present, but the rise in age at marriage is less abrupt and less steep than Flinn showed. Christer Lundh, “Marriage and economic change in Sweden during the 18th and 19th century”, in: Isabelle Devos and Liam Kennedy (eds), *Marriage and rural economy. Western Europe since 1400* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 217-241, 226. For France, Flinn’s trend is confirmed for the first two periods, but Henry and Houdaille found that between 1780 and 1820, a decline in women’s age at marriage set in which was to continue until the beginning of the twentieth century. Louis Henry and Jacques Houdaille, “Célibat et age au mariage aux xiie et xixe siècles en France”, *Population*, 34 (1979), 403-442 (Part 2); 413. Knodel found for Germany that there is a rise in age at marriage between 1700-1800, but it is less steep than Flinn suggests and it is followed by a decline after 1849. John Knodel, *Demographic behavior in the past. A study of fourteen German village populations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 122-3.
of industrialization). In a very broad sense, one could argue that Hajnal’s idea that an increase in the number of economic niches was connected to an increase in the number of marriages, holds when confronted with the English evidence: ages at marriage fall, and the development of the proportions never married in England (at which we will look later on) broadly points in this direction. Similarly, in French historiography, a deterioration of the economy as of 1765 “made it difficult for young people to establish themselves within the traditional auto-regulatory system” and thus was accompanied by an increase in the age at marriage (and the worsening of a number of other demographic indicators) after 1750 which is observed in figure 1.17

Summarizing the short overview of age at first marriage in Northwestern Europe, it will come as no surprise that broadly speaking, Hajnal’s model is indeed observed everywhere we look: ages at marriage in general remained over 25 for men and over 23 for women. Even if regional or local deviations fell below these bounds (and sometimes did so for prolonged periods of time, as was the case in England), national averages never did.

The matter is less uniform with regard to proportions never married. First of all, Hajnal himself was not quite certain where to put the line between “East” and “West” in terms of percentages never married. He suggested a limit of 10 per cent for men and 4 to 5 per cent for women.18 But it turns out that when we descend to the regional or local level, proportions never married in Northwestern Europe on occasion fall below these limits, and may even remain below Hajnal’s limits for some time.19 Moreover, in the English, and to a lesser extent in the French and Irish cases, proportions never married devel-

16. Wrigley and Schofield’s recently published new overview of English population history offers an altogether different view of this period: instead of a small rise between the pre-1750 period and 1790, they observe a significant fall in age at first marriage during the entire eighteenth century, for both men and women, a fall which is carried on well into the nineteenth century and eventually leads to a national average which begins to approach the limits set by Hajnal, that is, 25 for men and 23 for women. E. Anthony Wrigley, Rosalind S. Davies, James E. Oeppen, Roger S. Schofield, English Population History from Family Reconstitutions 1580-1837 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 184-5.


oped in the same direction as did age at first marriage, but with a different amplitude: when age at marriage rose or fell, so did the proportion never married. However, in general permanent celibacy rose or fell quicker than did age at marriage. Together with the low absolute levels of permanent celibacy sometimes observed in Northwestern Europe, this seems to suggest that in those cases, nuptiality was primarily adapted to changing circumstances via a change in proportions never married. In keeping with Hajnal's argumentation, a rise in permanent celibacy hints at worsening economic conditions (a decreasing availability of niches): an increasing group of people landed at the wrong side of the divide between those who were, and those who were not able to marry. Since the proportion of permanent celibacies rose or fell quicker than the average age at marriage, and since it did so without apparent time lags, it seems that adaptation to changing conditions could have taken place for a significant part via an increase or decrease in permanent celibacies. In comparison, age at marriage was less flexible.

However, the issue is less clear cut than it may seem. There are cases which hint at opposite, or at least less unequivocal developments. In France, for instance, the parallel trend of age at marriage and permanent celibacy seems to apply for women, but far less so for men. In Scotland, the opposite seems to be the case: the parallel connection seems to exist for men, but much less so for women. It may be, though, that this seeming discrepancy is due to the limited time span for which Scottish data are available.

There are also other factors in the adaptation of nuptiality to changing circumstances which have been left out of consideration here, but which may be interfering with the interplay between age at marriage and permanent celibacy. One could think, for instance, of changes in the labor market which may have specific effects on one sex or on certain social groups, but not on others; migration movements which disturb “normal” marriage behavior (as seems to have been the case in Ireland after the Famine); or legislation or other institutional influences prohibiting or stimulating certain nuptiality patterns and not others. These factors will be discussed more extensively in the next section.

20. Compare, for instance, the data for France referred to in note 19 with Henry and Houdaille, “Célibat et age au mariage” (Part 2), 413. Similarly, compare Wrigley and Schofield, Population history, 260 with Ibid., English population history, 184-5. For Ireland, compare Figures 3.3 and 3.5 in Liam Kennedy, “Marriage and economic conditions at the West European periphery: Ireland, 1600-2000”, in: Devos and Kennedy (eds), Marriage and rural economy, 85-100; 92. 94.

2.2 Remaining Problems

Theories describing marriage patterns are usually “economic at bottom”. This is most certainly true for Hajnal’s European Marriage Pattern with respect to Northwestern Europe. It will not be contested that the general accuracy of Hajnal’s observation that ages at marriage in Northwestern Europe were at the levels he said they would be and that in many cases, this is also true for levels of permanent celibacy. It is when one begins to scrutinize his explanation for these phenomena that problems arise.

To begin with, Hajnal himself questioned his explanation that a viable piece of land or an inheritance and the necessary wait for it to arrive, would always have a substantial effect on both age at marriage and proportions ever married, or that a land niche or inheritance were at all necessary in the first place. He argues that

the connexion between the death of the holder of land and its availability for the founding of a new family is (...) rather an indirect one (...). The rate at which land became available for the founding of new families may have been controlled not so much by death as by social arrangements.

For instance, the holder of a farm or a viable piece of land might die prematurely, meaning that the prospective heir would still be too young to found a family of his own. At that point, while in the strict sense a niche was available, it was not at the disposal of any serious candidates. By contrast, it was certainly possible for a young couple to take over a farm while the holder was still alive, provided that an arrangement was made to ensure the well being of the holder and his spouse. This was, for instance, routinely done in the eastern parts of the Netherlands and the bordering northwestern part of Germany well into the nineteenth century, in early-modern Sweden, and in thirteenth-century England. Moreover, holdings might be split into multiple new, but smaller holdings as was the custom in areas of partible inheritance. This practice thus reduced some of the rigorousness of the land niche model. In this connection, it may be interesting to notice

that partible inheritance largely prevailed in agriculturally marginal regions in Europe, such as West Flanders, the western part of France, in the Oberland region near Zürich, in northern Germany, or in areas of Spain.\textsuperscript{26} Here, an interesting phenomenon appears with regard to the economic logic of Hajnal’s model: precisely in those areas where the regional economy is reduced to marginality in comparison to areas of commercial agriculture, new, albeit increasingly marginal niches were regularly created by splitting up existing ones, while in agriculturally more prosperous regions, the way to new niches of a similar kind was often blocked by large-scale landownership or at least an inheritance practice geared towards the consolidation of existing estates. The carrying capacity of a region, a somewhat hidden background variable in the land niche model, was apparently not the decisive factor. Rather than economic niches in the form of viable holdings (which, if considered from the point of view of the carrying capacity, could have been much more numerous than they actually were), it were specific positions in the social and economic structure of a region or a community that were at stake. As we will see later on in more detail, this line of argument is represented by Ehmer and Viazzo.

It may well be, however, that we have to consider Hajnal’s land niche explanation in a broader, less land focused perspective. In his interpretation of the European Marriage Pattern, Hajnal looks mainly at rural Europe and at the functioning of agriculture and the land market, but naturally, a very significant number of marriages took place outside agriculture (in domestic industry, for example), and there were people who found a livelihood as a wage laborer in agriculture (relieving them of the need for a farm of their own), or who managed to set themselves up in other sectors. Therefore, instead of limiting our view to the land market, maybe we should take account of the development of real wages. In the context of Hajnal’s argument, real wages would then function as a substitute for or an addition to the land market. We would expect that a structural, long-term rise in real wages would have a similar effect on nuptiality as an expansion of the land market. In such a situation, age at marriage would fall, or marriage frequencies would rise, or both. Wrigley and Schofield have tentatively

established such a connection for England. But their results also show that the reaction to a change in real wages was less direct than we supposed and only took place with a time lag of at least one generation. Moreover, they cannot but hypothesize about the precise nature of the connection. 27 This shows that the connection between real wages and nuptiality is possibly as problematic as the connection between marriage market and land market. Moreover, real wages have the problem that they work in two directions. If, for instance, rising real wages are explained in terms of an increase in purchasing power of basic food stocks, as is often the case in pre-modern Europe, this is beneficial for consumers, but not necessarily so for producers. The latter group, however, was still the largest single occupational group in pre-modern Europe. Would this, then, imply that a rise in real wages would favor an increase in nuptiality among consumers, but a decrease among producers? Results from many family reconstitutions, which do not necessarily incorporate the development of real wages, but which often do distinguish between producers and consumers of food stocks, do not generally point in this direction. Rather, it is often found that nuptiality behavior between the two groups is hardly distinguishable. 28 This again indicates that the connection between resources and nuptiality is at least less direct than Hajnal suggested, an observation shared by Viazzo who noticed that since 1770, in the Alps “nuptiality declined in a period marked by an expansion of resources”. 29 Viazzo argues that marriage behavior is not the outcome of a struggle for niches, but is part of the dynamic formation and reformation of the regional social structure. 30

Ehmer, similarly, observed that Hajnal’s land niche model holds the danger of a digital view of reality: that there were those who had a viable niche, and those who had not, and that the numbers in one or the other group would be dependent on the availability of niches alone. 31 However, in his view such a


30. Viazzo, Upland communities, 221.

vision would ignore the rich social differentiation in pre-industrial Europe. There were not just viable niches, but there were niches which produced a surplus, there were niches that were barely viable, there were those that were not quite viable and which needed additional income from other activities, and there were niches which were viable only part of the time. There was a fluid border line from one type to the next, a border line which, moreover, changed and kept changing over time. It is, he argues, difficult to draw the line between a viable and a non-viable niche, and to define what exactly was a viable niche. Many authors have observed that between 1500 and 1800, in particular groups in Europe who occupied a surplus-producing niche hardly increased or even decreased, while groups occupying marginal niches increased manifold. Ehmer’s conclusion (like Viazzo’s) is that not the availability of viable niches as such was a decisive factor in marriage behavior, but the “availability of specific social positions within a richly diversified social structure”, a situation which was similar in rural and urban areas.

A further problem with the theory of the European Marriage pattern is brought forward by Hajnal when he observes that if the land niche explanation would work in the way he hypothesized, this may have a direct effect on the age at marriage and the marriage frequency of men, but need not for that reason influence the nuptiality of women. This is a serious problem, since “the uniqueness of the European pattern lies primarily in the high age at marriage of women (...) rather than in a high age at marriage for men”. Many family reconstitution studies have indeed shown that in pre-industrial Northwestern Europe men were usually 1-3 years older than their wives (although this was by no means a universal pattern: in nineteenth century Twente, for example, in around 28 per cent of all first marriages, the man was younger than his wife), and that this age gap was more-or-less constant. If, as Hajnal seems to suggest, the age at first marriage for women is not influenced by the mechanisms of the European Marriage Pattern, but moves with the age at marriage for men (as family reconstitution studies show), we seem to be at a loss currently to explain what ties these two ages together.

35. Wrigley et al., English Population History, 184-5; Knodel, Demographic behavior, 122-3; Hendrickx, In order not to fall into poverty.
The land niche model also plays an important role in theories of proto-industrialization, which may in parts be seen as an extension to Hajnal’s European Marriage Pattern. In the early 1970s, Mendels found that in Flanders, population growth occurred where none should have been, given the marginal agricultural structure of the region. He ascribed this to the introduction of a large-scale domestic industry, producing linen cloth for trans-regional markets. This proto-industrialization, a Europe-wide phenomenon, allowed the creation of a new set of economic niches on which a household could be founded largely or entirely independent of agriculture, and thus of the land market. Mendels claimed that because of this, proto-industrialization would disrupt the existing social and demographic fabric and would end the old homeostatic regime in which population and resources were in balance. Although this claim proved to be untenable for very large parts of Europe, it provoked much research into the functioning of the pre-modern economy and population development.

One recent outcome has been that hitherto the role of social institutions other than the market has been greatly underestimated. Social institutions appear to have had a considerable influence on factor markets and on population development. Ogilvie, for instance, has shown for Württemberg that, to mention but one example, communities could exercise a substantial effect on population growth by introducing very stringent conditions for citizenship. Citizenship in turn was necessary to execute any official office, to practice a trade or a craft (including such humble occupations as weaving), to apply for poor relief or to marry. Large families could only settle if they agreed not to apply for citizenship, every member had to be free of any obligations related to serfdom, illegal children were excluded from the right to inherit and could never acquire citizenship et cetera. In turn, non-government institutions such as guilds and merchant companies had their own sets of rules and limitations which regulated the movement of labor and capital very strictly. These limitations, of course, had a considerable impact on population development, and via their influence on the labor market they added to the constraints of the land niche model. But Württemberg was no exception. Strong institutions


37. For a recent overview of the discussion, see: Ogilvie and Cerman, *European proto-industrialization*. For a non-European example, see: Osamu Saito, “Population and the Peasant Family Economy in Proto-industrial Japan”, *Journal of Family History*, 8 (1983), 30-54.


which indirectly attempted to influence population growth can be found in as liberal a country as the Netherlands, where the so-called *marken* (institutions which controlled, among other things, access to land) had a very significant influence on who was allowed access to land and who was not.\(^{40}\) This was also the case in North Germany, where *marken* likewise played a significant role.\(^{41}\) Numerous other examples of the influence of institutions could be added here. It will be clear that under certain circumstances social institutions in pre-industrial Europe were entirely able and willing to influence local and regional demography, and to restrict access to resources.

From reading Hajnal’s arguments concerning the functioning of the European Marriage Pattern, one gets, moreover, the impression that pre-modern Europe was entirely rural and agricultural. This, of course, it was not. Nonetheless, we do not see significantly different marriage patterns in urban or industrial regions than we do in rural, agrarian ones.\(^{42}\) In the cities, one could argue, guilds took over the function which a viable piece of land had in rural areas. But not every inhabitant of a city was a craftsman or a trader and not every city or region had strong guilds. So what ruled the age at marriage of the propertyless masses or of those otherwise involved in the city’s economy? If they married, they still did so well within the bounds of Hajnal’s pattern, but their marriage behavior cannot have been governed by the land niche explanation.\(^{43}\) As we have just seen, many European communities had rules regulating age at marriage and marriage frequency at least to some extent, and Lynch, following Lesthaeghe and Smith, argues that the influence of guilds and other institutions in the towns and cities of Europe may have percolated down and sideways to groups who formally did not fall within the jurisdiction of the guilds, but who were influenced by it nonetheless.\(^{44}\) But what about less supervised urbanized areas in other parts of Northwestern Europe, such as Paris, London or Amsterdam? Here, Lynch argues, “young people may have been constrained more by the sheer costs of living and lack of housing and the delay they imposed on the date of marriage”.\(^{45}\)

Therefore, it is not just the extended form of a land niche model that puts constraints on marriage here, but everything that comes with a marriage. It is not just a matter of finding a niche, but also the problem of having to take care of the overhead connected to the niche that imposes a serious constraint on marriage. Possibly the costs of this overhead were all in all as large as, or even larger than that of the niche as such, which would have been much like it is the case in many cities today.

This brings us to a more general observation. It seems to me that Hajnal, in taking the land niche model as his explanation for high ages and relatively low levels of marriage in Northwestern Europe, has overlooked the more complex area of the total costs connected to marriage. These costs not only involved acquiring a niche, but also, as was remarked already, the costs of satisfying the requirements of communities and other institutions, the costs of housing, of initial investments in tools and the like, of satisfying or circumventing traditional values regarding marriage, and, in particular for servants, the costs of giving up a known future to trade it in for a married life.46 To this, one might add the costs and consequences of legislation and the availability of alternatives to marriage, as is argued by Guinnane in the Irish case.47

Only if we take into account these total costs and balance them with the long-term benefits which a marriage had to offer, and the expectations and confidence (or lack thereof) which people may have had about the long-term development of the standard of living, will we be able to begin to understand the nature of the connection between economy and the Northwestern European Marriage Pattern.

A final point which remains unsettled to date is the timing of the starting point of the European Marriage Pattern. Hajnal is vague about this, he dates it “before 1700”.48 Recently, Seccombe undertook an attempt to date the starting point more accurately and arrived at the late Middle Ages, to be more precise, at the period following the Black Death in Europe.49 A large-scale catastrophe laid waste a significant part of Europe’s viable holdings and wreaked havoc in the cities in no lesser extent. However, the immediate demographic rebound one would expect in the aftermath of such a mortality crisis, did not materialize.

46. On the latter, see: Jona Schellekens, “Determinants of Marriage Patterns Among Farmers and Laborers in Two Eighteenth-century Dutch Villages”, *Journal of Family History*, 16 (1991), 139-155, esp. 152.
Seccombe argues that “a psychological response to the collective memory of plague trauma” resulted in an decreased inclination to marry. But he argues that by and in itself, this could not have been enough to “generate a massive restriction of marriage in the absence of material changes in the conditions of household formation that might enable nuptial decision-making in demographically significant ways”. Instead, he argues that changes in landholding policy and a structural (and terminal) crisis of the feudal system are to be made responsible.

In the period prior to the occurrence of the Black Death, landholding was intimately connected to marriage: tenants were not allowed to occupy a holding while they remained unmarried, and it was urged upon land holders or their widows to remarry, should they become widowed. After the Black Death, when land was abundant and labor had become scarce, a competition for labor developed between landlords. As a result, many fundamental feudal obligations such as labor services were relinquished to ensure that labor was available and that at least part of the rents income was maintained. Obligations to marry or remarry in order to obtain land were eased, and demesne land began to be leased out. The bond between landholding and marriage was thus loosened. At the same time, Seccombe argues, community control over marriage behavior was increased, urging couples not to marry until a stable livelihood was secured. Seccombe’s argument for the latter change is not entirely convincing (or rather: it is not entirely clear), but in my view it comes down to an increased urge of parents to secure their old age. One type of authority (that of the feudal lord over his subjects) was replaced by an other (that of parents and the community over their children).

3 Household Formation Systems
In 1982/1983, Hajnal published what he explicitly called a sequel to his 1965 article. In this sequel, he focused on household formation and the differences he saw between Northwest European household formation systems and those in the rest of the world (but mainly Asia). The differences he saw were few but vital: Northwest Europe was characterized by a system of “simple households” in which, firstly, both partners married relatively late, secondly, for both spouses, marriage was preceded by a phase as a servant, in which they circulated between households (known as “life-cycle service”)52, and thirdly, upon marriage, the newly wedded founded a new, independent and neolocal household.

50. Seccombe, A millennium of family change, 152-3.
In the rest of the world, Hajnal argued, the joint household system predominated. This was characterized, firstly, by relatively early marriage for both partners. Secondly, contrary to the pattern in Northwest Europe, young couples did not set up a new, independent household but started their marriage as part of a household in which an other couple was in charge (usually the parents of one of the spouses). Thirdly, at some point this joint household might split to form two or more new households.53

### 3.1 Variations of household forms in Northern Europe

Hajnal’s article rested heavily on what had been achieved with regard to household and family forms at and around the Cambridge Group.54 In 1965, Laslett published his monumental review of European family history, in which he settled nineteenth century theories by which the European family of the past had been predominantly complex, consisting of multiple generations and multiple conjugal units.55 Laslett found that, to the contrary, the pre-industrial European household had been nuclear, consisting mainly of a couple and their own children. This book created a large and still ongoing debate about the uniformity of European household forms, and in its course, evidence for a much larger diversity of European family forms started to pile up.56 It led Laslett to review his ideas and to emphasize instead a subdivision of European household systems in

52. Peter Laslett, “Characteristics of the Western family considered over time”, *Journal of Family History*, 2 (1972), 89-115, 262-263 (corrigenda); 104.
53. Hajnal, “Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system”, 69.
55. Peter Laslett, *The world we have lost*.
four regions: Northwest (late marriage, large proportions unmarried, nuclear family dominant, neolocality, life-cycle service), West-Central (late marriage, large proportions unmarried, nuclear family not dominant but present), Mediterranean (early marriage, complex households, no neolocality, no life-cycle service) and East (early marriage, complex households, no neolocality, no life-cycle service). This model was yet again followed by a large number of detailed case studies showing that once more, Laslett’s solution was too undifferentiated and did not take into account the significant variation which existed within each of the four regions he proposed. Especially the Mediterranean region turned out to be far more diverse than Laslett had accounted for, including many areas in which size, structure and development of the household were either far more like what had been postulated for the Northwest or were significant variations on the Mediterranean household.

Moreover, the variations were not just geographical, but also turned out to develop and change over time. It soon became clear that the census data on which both Hajnal’s and Laslett’s results were entirely (Hajnal) or predominantly (Laslett) based, only showed part of the picture. What they had ignored was that households tend to change their size and composition over time. Once the dynamic approach of the family cycle and the life course began to be included in household studies, it appeared that even in regions of prototypical nuclear households, phases of simple household structure were alternated with phases in which the household became more complex and included multiple generations and/or multiple conjugal units. Janssens, for example, shows that in the Dutch city of Tilburg, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not only were around 10 per cent of all households complex, but a large part of the households went through two complex phases during the household’s cycle. Around 15 per cent of all households were complex at the beginning of their existence. After that the percentage of complex households decreased gradually to around 7 – 10 per cent, but that share increased again to around 15 – 25 per cent toward the end of the household’s cycle. This leads her to conclude that “40 to 60 per cent of all households experienced extension [at some point during their family cycle].”

57. Peter Laslett, “Family and household as work group and kin group: areas of traditional Europe compared”, in: Wall, Robin, Laslett (eds), Family forms in historic Europe, 513-564; 518-9.
58. For an overview of these variations in Southern and Eastern Europe, see the contributions of Viazzo, and Plakans and Wetherell to this volume.
60. Angelique Janssens, Family and social change. The household as a process in an industrializing community (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 76.
Similar results, for the pre-industrial and early-industrial period, were found elsewhere in the Netherlands. But also other, hitherto unsuspected areas of Northwestern Europe turned out to have had their share of complex households. Laslett himself admitted that in pre-industrial England, around 15 per cent of all households must have been complex rather than nuclear. Sokoll argued that pauper households in pre-industrial, early-modern England were probably predominantly complex in structure. Reay, like Janssens, finds that in three nineteenth-century Kent parishes, between 47 and 59 per cent of all households had a complex phase. Egerbladh showed that in pre-industrial northern Sweden, complex households in a stem family system were the norm in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The industrialization process brought about a steep rise in the proportions of complex households, as is shown, for example, by Anderson, who found that in Preston in the middle of the nineteenth century, 23 per cent of all households were complex. Armstrong, likewise, found 21 per cent of complex households in York. Even more illustrative in this respect is the series of household composition figures given by Ruggles. He shows that from 1700 to 1850, there is a sharp rise in the proportion of extended households in a number of English communi-


ties, from under 10 per cent in 1700 to between 12 and 25 per cent in 1850. Similar effects could be witnessed on the continent: for the Luxembourg town of Dudelange, for instance, it was shown that rapid industrialization led to a sharp increase in households taking in extended kin and lodgers. Naturally, Hajnal specifically addresses pre-industrial societies to develop his model, and therefore examples of industrializing areas may seem to bear little relevance to the matter discussed here. But what the rise of complex households in industrializing areas does show is that “simplicity” or “complexity” of households are not inherent and invariable characteristics of Northwest Europe, but are instead the result of interactions between economic, cultural and social-demographic factors: a change in one of these could have grave repercussions for any of the others.

It is along this line of argument that David Gaunt proposed the approach of eco-types. Hajnal’s model of Northwest European household formation stands out as monolithic, almost hermetic. And even though Laslett’s four sub-regions show differentiation between them, each of the four regions forms a system that is closed in itself. Yet, as was shown before, the variations in household size and composition within the Northwest European region were unmistakable (and they were even more so in the Mediterranean region). With these variations in mind, Gaunt (and after him in particular Mitterauer) developed an approach in which the regional physical environment, variations in economy, social structure, culture and institutional coercion were held to influence the regional demography. What is new in this approach is that on the one hand, by incorporating and weighing all of these factors, the analytical net is thrown wider than is the case in more traditional methods of analysis. On the other hand, since the focus is on regional variation, the areas considered are smaller than was the case with Hajnal’s and Laslett’s approach.

68. François Hendrickx, “Reconstructing Dudelange: immigration and family formation in a Luxembourg boomtown, 1890”
70. See, for instance, Michael Mitterauer, “Peasant and non-peasant forms in relation to the physical environment and the local economy”, *Journal of Family History*, 17 (1992), 139-160. A comparable example in: Viazzo, *Upland communities*. 
Consciously or unconsciously, the method has since been adopted by a large number of scholars.\textsuperscript{71} Especially Mitterauer stresses the influence of physical environment and labor requirements on household size and formation. In Austria, for instance, cattle raising areas display a set of labor requirements that differ fundamentally from those of viticulture or arable farming, leading to very different household forms.\textsuperscript{72} Similarly, Gunnlaugsson and Guttormsson show that there was a considerable difference in nineteenth-century household structure between coastal fishing communities and inland agricultural communities on Iceland.\textsuperscript{73} Differing labor requirements caused fishing households to be small (mean household size: 5.0) and strictly nuclear, while agricultural households in the inland regions were on average considerably larger (mean household size: 7.9) and, mainly due to the presence of a large number of servants and other hired labor, were complex.\textsuperscript{74}

In her study of the Württemberg Black Forest, Ogilvie shows that in the proto-industrial area around Wildberg, institutional restraints on free settlement and movement, and on maximum production volumes had significant consequences for population growth: rising production did not lead to a rising immigration of labor, and stringently maintained production quotas meant that labor requirements (and with them household size) remained limited.\textsuperscript{75} Conversely, in neighboring Neckarhausen, the absence of such constraints and the presence of a mixed economy went hand in hand with a rapid population growth during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{76}

In a different form, we find ecotype-oriented work today in studies focusing on household strategies, which see the larger socioeconomic context as a set of constraints on the behavior of families, who in turn have to deal with these constraints to reach and maintain a minimum standard of living, or a certain level of well-being.

A second well-known example of the influence of institutional coercion on household composition is found in inheritance studies. In the period prior to Napoleon, impartible inheritance dominated in large parts of Europe. Impartible inheritance usually led to complex households, with often at least two conjugal units: the owner of the farm and his wife, and (in a later stage of the family cycle)

\textsuperscript{71} For a recent collection of contributions, see: Richard L. Rudolph (ed.), The European peasant family and society. Historical studies (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995).

\textsuperscript{72} Mitterauer, “Peasant and non-peasant forms”.


\textsuperscript{74} Gunnlaugsson, Guttormsson, “Household structure and urbanization”, 328 ff.

\textsuperscript{75} Ogilvie, State corporatism, 42-72, 139-162, 181-222, 293 ff.

\textsuperscript{76} Sabean, Property, production and the family in Neckarhausen, 40-1, 58-9, 362-70.
the designated heir with his wife and children. With the introduction of the Napoleonic Code Civil in 1804, impartible inheritance was formally abolished in all areas under French control. Although through much of the nineteenth century, peasants struggled to deal with the new legal requirements (and in fact often ignored them for as long as they could), the introduction of this particular piece of legislation went hand in hand with an increasing decline of the complex household in areas of hitherto impartible inheritance.77 It remains unclear, however, in how far this particular change had consequences for the development of age at marriage and proportions of permanent celibacies: at the point where the decrease of complex households becomes visible, industrialization had begun to set in, and we arrive in an entirely different set of assumptions and explanations with regard to marriage behavior and family formation.

Finally, there is of course the institutionally coerced complex household structure under feudal law, best known from Czap’s studies of Russian society and Plakans’ work on the Baltic area, which show that settlement and household composition were governed by institutional provisions. With the demise of the feudal system in the nineteenth century, the proportions of complex households decreased also.78 However, household forms could also be the result of a combination of institutional pressure and the attempt to divert or counter this pressure by the population: as Gaunt has shown for parts of Czechoslovakia, conscription rules forcing unmarried young men to join the army led to an increase in early marriages, thus stimulating the formation of complex households.79

### 3.2 Age at marriage and life-cycle service

The constant factor between Hajnal’s first and second articles, at least with regard to Northern Europe, is age at marriage. In both articles he stresses that in Northern Europe, age at marriage for both partners was comparatively high. In section 2 of this contribution, it was shown that there is little doubt about the general

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validity of this observation (although many questions remain with regard to Hajnal’s explanation of this phenomenon). Interestingly, however, it appears that in his 1982/1983 article, Hajnal had come up with something new regarding the late age at marriage of both men and women in pre-industrial Northern Europe. Had the forced wait for an inheritance still been the linchpin of the argument for delayed marriage in the earlier article, now an additional explanation was offered: since neolocality was the custom, a new couple had to save some money or goods to be able to afford to set up a new household. For this, a phase during youth working as a servant (usually in agriculture) was a good strategy. This had multiple effects: as employers preferred unmarried servants, a period of service kept the young people away from the marriage market, thus increasing the average age at marriage. Moreover, a number of years as a servant allowed young people to gather some savings and, equally important, experiences, be it in farm or household management, in social skills or in managing one’s own income. Both of these effects were good reasons to abstain from marriage for a number of years. The consequent rise in age at marriage had as an additional effect that, given a more-or-less natural fertility, the number of offspring was reduced.

Servants were, in Laslett’s words, “young, unmarried persons – indeed, sexually mature persons waiting to be married, for four-fifths of the male servants and two-thirds of the female servants were under the prevalent marriage age”. Many studies have shown that in pre-industrial Northern Europe indeed around 10-12 per cent of the total population worked as a servant at any one time. This leads to a total of around 50-60 per cent of all youths between 15-25 years. The general pattern was that servants were employed for limited periods. One reason that the contracts were usually limited was because after a stay of one year the community in which the servant stayed would be liable for his support, should the need arise (this was particularly so in England). An other reason for short-term contracts, which was applicable throughout Northern Europe, was the structure of labor demand in agriculture, with its sequence of tasks bound to the seasons.

80. Laslett, “Characteristics of the Western family”, 104.
Crenshaw adds, however, that in some cases, life-cycle service might turn into life-long service: since setting up a household was expensive, and given the presence of a rudimentary system of social security in Northern Europe as a last resort, to remain unmarried and become a servant for life was certainly an option for part of the life-cycle servants.\textsuperscript{84}

Reading through the literature, there seems to be little debate about the bare presence of large numbers of servants in pre-industrial Northern Europe, or about the effect of service on age at marriage. The discussion primarily focuses on the manifestations of life-cycle service. For one thing, there is the opposition between towns and countryside: the numbers of servants were usually higher in the countryside than in the towns.\textsuperscript{85} Mitterauer also points out that one has to differentiate between social classes and economies: for Austria, he reports high proportions of servants in upper-class and artisan districts in towns, but low shares in suburbs and industrial districts. He also finds high proportions of servants in cattle-raising areas and areas of large-scale commercial farming, but low proportions in areas of subsistence farming, mining, and proto-industry.\textsuperscript{86} He adds that when dealing with servants, Hajnal drew the borders of the Northern European system too narrowly: in Austria and the bordering regions to the east, Mitterauer finds patterns of life-cycle service that bear great similarity with Hajnal’s Northern European pattern.\textsuperscript{87}

A few questions with regard to life-cycle service and age at marriage have remained unaddressed. Mitterauer, for instance, claims that “service always provided training while working”, which seems an obvious observation. However, he also argues that “the thesis that service in another’s house is always linked with learning can also be reversed: whoever wished to learn something in the European past primarily achieved this by entering service”.\textsuperscript{88} Previously, he had observed that those sons who were to inherit their parents’ farm, stayed at home. So where did they, who were in a most critical position as they were to inherit and continue a farm or a business, do their learning, if not at home?

A second point is closely connected to the behavior of the siblings who did not enter into service but stayed at home. As we have seen, Hajnal argues that life-cycle service contributes to a rise in age at marriage. This suggests that with-


\textsuperscript{87} Mitterauer, “Servants and youth”, 25.

\textsuperscript{88} Mitterauer, “Servants and youth”, 30-31.
out a phase as a servant, age at marriage would be lower than it was for those who did go into service. What does not seem to be addressed in the literature so far is the question whether this is true. Did young people who went out into service indeed marry later than their siblings who stayed at home? Or were, in the end, the siblings who stayed at home the ones who ended up either unmarried or as heirs? There seems to be very little differentiation, or rather integration in the literature with regard to this point.

A third point is the question about the relationship between service and economic trend. Hajnal suggests that under adverse economic conditions, people might sit out the trough by remaining in service longer, which would lead to a further delay in marriage.\textsuperscript{89} The question, of course, is whether this is the only applicable mechanism. It is well thinkable that under a downturn, servants might be the first ones to experience the consequences in that the rewards for their labor, as well as the demand for it might drop. Under those conditions, their age at marriage might rise, but not because of the fact that they remained in service longer, but because of the (partial) collapse of the service system, causing a decreased opportunity to save.

Of course, as Mitterauer already pointed out, there were plenty of regions in Northern Europe where, even in pre-industrial times, there was not much demand for service labor anyway. Most prominent among those are the areas of subsistence farming, where small scale agriculture was supplemented with proto-industry.\textsuperscript{90} In those areas, seasonal underemployment was often met by an increased industrial activity, tying youths to the parental home to assist in the production of, for instance, textiles, instead of leaving to work as servants as they would in commercial agriculture areas or urban agglomerations. In many of those areas, however, first of all there was little difference between those who were involved in domestic industry and those who were not, and secondly, average age at marriage did not differ markedly from those areas where service was abundant.\textsuperscript{91} Thus, different eco-types could well lead to similar results, albeit for totally different reasons.

3.3 The individual and the collective
One aspect of the Northern European household formation system which Hajnal did not cover but which seems to bear some relevance to this study, is that of the roles of the individual and the collective. In the literature, we find that the dominance of the nuclear family in Northern Europe had two major conse-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89} Hajnal, "Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system", 461.
\item \textsuperscript{90} On those areas, and the structural functioning of the household, see: Hans Medick, "The Proto-industrial Family Economy".
\item \textsuperscript{91} Hendrickx, 'In order not to fall into poverty', 130-153.
\end{itemize}
quences. Firstly, the nuclear household was less well equipped to deal with economic and social hardship than was the joint family household. Secondly, the more stringent the regime of the nuclear family and of neolocality was applied, the more urgent the need became to develop a collective support system for those who did live in a neolocal nuclear family. Therefore, it is argued, in Northern Europe the role of the collectivity was more important than it was in Southern Europe, where the joint family dominated and the consequences of hardship were absorbed to a far greater extent within the household and the kin group. This set of statements has become known as the “nuclear hardship hypothesis”, and has played a major role in the discussion about structural differences between Northern and Southern Europe. Elsewhere, it has been referred to as the “life boat ethic”, and is confronted with the so-called “corporate identity” of extended kin groups in Asia.

Laslett finds that in pre-industrial England, around 15 per cent of all households were solitaries or non-family households. He argues that perhaps, these households may be seen as victims of nuclear hardship: for some reason, these persons had ended up outside of nuclear households and were now on their own. However, the simultaneous presence of a significant proportion of complex households also leads him to consider that even in England, nuclear hardship never manifested itself in its full rigor: for many orphans, widowed persons or elderly, there was a place in a kin group, or they were taken care of to some extent in other ways. “There was an unspoken, unbreakable principle common to all European countries at all times of which we have knowledge (...) that under no circumstances should anyone be allowed to die, the kinless and those without home and family along with all the rest”. For those who could not fall back to a supportive family, there was a final security layer in the form of collective provisions like, for example, poor relief in old age, temporary support for families during winter, or jobs in service for orphans. The collectivity therefore functioned as a security net both for individuals and for kin groups who had fallen into hardship. However, collective care was not simply a matter of altruism. Ogilvie, for instance, describes Württemberg in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.


93. Monica Das Gupta, “Lifeboat versus corporate ethic: social and demographic implications of stem and joint families”, Social Science and Medicine, 49 (1999), 173-184; and her contribution to this volume.


95. Laslett, “Family, kinship and collectivity”, 170.
centuries as a region which lived under high economic and institutional pressure. This pressure manifested itself, for example in that “women who lived independently as *Eigenbrötlerinnen* (literally ‘own-breaders’ [women earning their own bread]) were reported by neighbours to community courts which ordered them back into the households of male kin or masters, and threatened the disobedient with loss of poor relief or expulsion from the community”.96 Institutional regulations were thus developed which saw to it that as few people as possible came into a position in which they could claim support from the collectivity: relatives were to take the single (although not necessarily destitute!) woman in, failing those, a master would do, and if he couldn’t or the independent woman wouldn’t be taken in, support was no longer guaranteed.97 In Württemberg, the last line of support was organized by the collectivity, and the collectivity, under severe economic pressure as it was, saw to it that what little support it had to offer was not abused. If other means of support were available, they had to be used first, even if this meant forcing individual people upon other families. It also means, however, that precisely in a region of what one could call institutionalized nuclear hardship, there was a central role for the nuclear household in serving as the prime barrier against that nuclear hardship.

Lately, a few studies have appeared which look in greater detail into the role of extended kin in Northern Europe in preserving a kinship network which could serve, among other things, as an instance of social security and preservation of kinship interests.98 In the second volume of a large scale microhistory of Neckarhausen, David Sabean looks in great detail at the organization and functioning of kinship networks.99 Among the uses of middle- and upper class kin networks, Sabean mentions “getting a place in a school or Gymnasium”, “strategic support for one another [...] in the development of careers”, “apprenticeship training at the hands of relatives or through their intercession”, “to learn household management, writing skills, music and general deportment in the house-

96. Ogilvie, *State corporatism*, 64.
hold”. Moreover, he mentions that daughters were regularly sent to other members of the kin network, to “live with elderly family members or with young mothers busy with household chores, with sick or widowed friends and relatives”. But his main focus is on the role of kinship networks in class building and the maintenance of families’ interests. As had been argued previously by Ehmer and Viazzo, it turns out that kinship networks were used extensively to help individual members “onward and upward”, or to at least preserve positions and interests within the class system of the community. In general, it shows that kinship networks were instrumental in coming forward in life, and that there was no such thing as an autonomous nuclear family. To the contrary, groups of nuclear families held together to form smaller or larger fleets of life boats which helped each other out, and which could stretch out over vast areas of the European continent (especially, of course, in middle and upper class networks).

A different approach is taken by Barry Reay. He establishes that in nineteenth-century Hernhill, one of the three Kent communities he studied, 60 per cent of all families had first to third degree kinship links with at least one other household within the community. This figure would rise to 70 per cent if kinship relations to households in neighboring communities or kinship relations to kin living within the same house were included. Moreover, of the members of households with kin relations within the community, 72 per cent came from within a 10 mile radius around Hernhill. The picture which arises, therefore, is one which shows households as being closely tied into a network of kinship relations, not as autonomous nuclear families. Of course, the question is, how well these relationships were used in terms of mutual support. Here, Reay points at labor relations which were frequent among kin, at support for both elderly and the very young (including illegitimate children growing up with relatives instead of with their natural mother) and at kinship relations being instrumental in finding a new job. One witness even refers to the area beyond the influence of his kinship network as “foreign land”. Much like Sabean, Reay concludes that kin formed a central element in the functioning of the community, and that “couples formed new ‘independent’ households but most did so amidst a community of kin, strongly embedded in a wider social network”.

In the end, Peter Laslett reaches a similar conclusion from the other end when considering the balance between care given by the family and care given by

100. Sabean, Kinship in Neckarhausen, 460-2.
101. For ample illustrations of this, see the series of biographies: Sabean, Kinship in Neckarhausen, 294-359.
102. Reay, Microhistories, 164.
103. Reay, Microhistories, 165.
104. Reay, Microhistories, 172.
105. Reay, Microhistories, 173.
the collectivity in Northern Europe. He argues that “While recognizing regional peculiarities (...), I am inclined to view that old people were sustained by a whole range of expedients by which family and collectivity collaborated within the customary framework as the situation required”.  

Are we, then, on our way to agreement in the matter of the individual and the collective? Not if we were to follow David Reher, who in a recent article pleaded for a new division of Europe along Hajnal’s lines, but with a different criterion. Along the lines of the classical nuclear hardship division, he argues that Europe ought to be divided in a Southern area with strong family ties and a Northern area with weak family ties, termed strong and weak family systems, respectively.  

Northern Europe would in his view consist of Scandinavia, the British Isles, the Low Countries, and large parts of Germany and Austria. The Mediterranean area would have to hold for Southern Europe. He admits that “specific boundaries of different family systems are often not crystal clear”, and that “within individual families there is much room for heterogeneity affecting families and family life”.  

This, however, “does not negate the existence of more general regularities affecting large areas of Europe”.  

His definition of what strong and weak family systems are, revolves around the age at which children leave the parental home, and to a lesser extent around the way in which families organize support for their most vulnerable members. In Northern Europe, young people leave their home long before marriage, while in Southern Europe, marriage and the setting up of an individual household is deemed the appropriate time to leave. He finds that this opposition has deep historical roots, referring to the long tradition of life-cycle service in Northern Europe and the absence of it in Southern Europe. He then concludes that

one of the implications of these differences was that in northern Europe the need to cope with periods of economic difficulty fell squarely on the shoulders of these young adults, as opposed to the south where economic hardship was shared more equally by the entire family group. The protective function of the family in Spain was far greater than it was in England.  

An evaluation of his claims is not easy. In view of the broadly developed service system in Northern Europe, the general argument that there, children on aver-  

age left their homes earlier than did children in Southern Europe, will not be contested. However, Reher suggests that this in itself is an indication for proper or improper care and support from the family: a family that sends its children out to take care of themselves is not as protective as is a family that keeps the children at home until (or even after) marriage. I think this is one claim too many. It will always be necessary to judge a system of support, be it in a strong or weak family system, by the conditions that brought it about and by the consequences it had for the individual. Moreover, how does one judge what strategy is more or less protective in the context of pre-industrial Europe? It is my impression that parents in Northern Europe prepared their children as well as they could for the life that awaited them in adulthood, as did parents for their children in Southern Europe. The critical point is that, when arguing on this level of analysis, the systems were so different that they required different strategies to learn how to deal with them. The problem, however, is that since Reher argues that intra-regional differentiations are more-or-less to be ignored, it is difficult to refute his proposal. His model, although aimed at a supra-national level, is nonetheless built on the basis of a number of well-selected local or national cases. Apart from the amount of work it would take, it would not be too difficult to contrast many of his examples with cases that claim the opposite. Peter Laslett, for instance, points at the observation that in societies that are famous for their close kinship ties (China and Kenya), there are obvious and numerous cases of nuclear hardship, especially with regard to the care of elderly.\(^{111}\) As we have just seen, Reay finds ample proof in Kent of care and support provided by families, as does Sabean in Neckarhausen. Gaunt shows how, in Medieval Scandinavia, old people were taken in by their children or their heirs, or, failing that, were handed down through the community. Often, they also would regulate their own old age through a retirement contract.\(^{112}\) That these customs regularly ended in conflict is beside the point here: first of all, it is not as if the southern model of close kin relations is without conflict, and secondly, it does not tell us anything about the quality of care, support or protection, but merely about the concrete manifestations thereof.

4 Evaluation
In the previous part of this exposé, Hajnal’s European Marriage Pattern and his proposal for two kinds of household formation systems were critically reviewed. In both cases, the outcome was obvious: with broad sweeps, Hajnal claimed to have found, on a supra-national scale, systems that were to a large extent internally homogeneous, or that were at least more similar within themselves than they were in comparison to each other. Many efforts have since been undertaken

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111. Laslett, “Family, kinship and the collectivity”, 154-5.
112. Gaunt, “Property and kin relations”, 251-262.
to prove in detail (almost always in the form of carefully argued case studies) that Hajnal was wrong, or to prove at least that the matter was more differentiated than he had considered. Was then Hajnal’s greatest merit that he initiated a discourse with his articles? It is indeed one, and certainly not the least, of the many merits of his work. With regard to the European Marriage Pattern, the most serious critique has been on his views regarding Southern Europe and the Balkans. For Northern Europe, we came to the conclusion that in general, his view that age at marriage was comparatively high and that the proportions of permanent celibacy were high also, was confirmed. For the situation in the pre-industrial North, the European Marriage Pattern as such has become a part of modern historiography. It is his explanation for these phenomena that caused much debate and still leaves a number of questions unanswered.

Concerning his proposal for two kinds of household formation systems, the judgement is necessarily less unequivocal. This is not only because of the system itself, but also because of the time and the research environment at the moment in which it was raised. Again, the most serious criticism was provided by case studies focusing on Southern Europe, where a far larger diversity in family forms was observed than Hajnal had anticipated. With regard to Northern Europe, there has been much debate about the question whether nuclear families were indeed the norm before the industrialization. It was shown that although at first glance, the presence of the nuclear family is almost universal, there are also serious indications which point at increasing and decreasing complexity of the household over its family cycle. Moreover, it is gradually becoming clear that kinship networks and the collectivity, which was organized through kinship networks, took over many of the functions that are ascribed to the joint family, thus adding some “corporate identity” to the “life boat ethic”. Even the institution of life-cycle service proved to be more differentiated than had been anticipated at first. As always when boldly constructed systems are criticized, it turned out that closer to the surface, reality had more shades than the black-and-white of the initial design.

Moreover, Hajnal’s grand scheme was published at a moment when the field of family studies had already largely been occupied by research initiated at or around the Cambridge Group. Contrary to his 1965 article on the European Marriage Pattern, which stirred up a discussion in its own right, the 1982/1983 article was largely considered as one of many contributions to the ongoing discussion on family forms and household formation. This was certainly true with respect to Hajnal’s suggestion that the nuclear family dominated in Northern Europe, a hypothesis that was raised almost simultaneously in much more detail by Laslett. The servants issue, which had been tentatively raised previously by Laslett, had also been extensively dealt with by Kussmaul before Hajnal’s 1982/1983 article appeared, and generally, consensus had been reached on that topic. Consequently, Hajnal’s 1982/1983 article attracted less debate than had the 1965 article.
and on the scale of the intra-Northern European debate, the article, rather than breaking new ground, proved to be a side-track.

However, with regard to the review of Hajnal’s two systems of household formation, one final remark must be allowed. In my view, all of the criticisms that have been reviewed so far in connection with this model have one thing in common, which is that with regard to their level of analysis, they are all in all beside the point. In so far as they deal with Northern Europe, they largely focus on local or regional variations in all three characteristics of Hajnal’s model. But of course Hajnal knew of these variations. He must have anticipated that on the local or the regional level, differentiation was what one would expect to find. Of course he built his hypotheses on national data and attempted to find similarities in those to construct a supra-national similarity from them. But not to confront his outcomes with more national data from within Northern Europe but to contrast them with Asia and the rest of the world. That was the challenge he offered, and only very few researchers have accepted it.

One of the notable exceptions has been Jack Goody, who in a closely argued study undertook to review Hajnal’s ideas on the mechanisms of household formation in East and West.114 His conclusion (again, obviously) is that Hajnal sketched the differences between Europe and the rest of the world in too general terms. Many elements which Hajnal claims to have been part of a strictly European system are found in non-European cultures also, to some extent, or even more so. In present day Maharashtra (India), 77 per cent of the households are nuclear (in Europe this is between 80 and 95 per cent).115 The mean age of a new head of household in Asia is about 30, which is not much older than that of a new head of household in Europe.116 In complex family systems, Goody argues, it is sometimes difficult to decide who is the true head of the household. In his first study of Neckarhausen, Sabean was confronted by the same problem, since property was transferred only very gradually from one generation to the next.117 In this fashion, Goody attempts to show that the differences between Europe and the rest of the world are, upon closer inspection, not differences of principle but of degree. To unveil these degrees is, in my view, the challenge that Hajnal left us. It is time to take it up.

113. Lasllett, Family life and illicit love, chapter 1; Kussmaul, Servants in husbandry.
6

The Hajnal line and Eastern Europe

Andrejs Plakans & Charles Wetherell
Introduction
The “Hajnal line” has been a part of the discourse of historical demography for more than a third of a century. During that time it has achieved a totemic quality, becoming a symbol of various attempts to demarcate, primarily within the European continent, large areas of difference and similarity in various socio-demographic behaviors. Not all students of Europe’s historical populations have engaged in this effort; and, while some have sought to refine it, others have concluded that such inquiries have produced little of permanent value. Nonetheless, the “Hajnal line” has continued to receive considerable attention, both as an incentive to modifications as well as an object of re-evaluation.

In his well-known 1965 essay Hajnal distinguished between “Western” and “Eastern” European marriage patterns on either side of line drawn from St. Petersburg in Russia to Trieste in Italy. The effort to delineate macro-regions was not in itself surprising, given the European continent’s great ethnic and political diversity. Virtually all disciplines that have dealt with the European continent have exhibited the desire to speak about it in both particular and regional terms. As historians, we share the continuing interest in hypothesizing macro-divisions, in part because we do not believe that historical European diversity was random. But we also believe that regional schemes should be kept under constant scrutiny, because such line-drawing is always meant to be (and decisively was, in the Hajnal case) a spur to further research and does indeed generate it. It stands to reason, then, that periodically a particular regionalization effort should be reviewed in light of the new evidence that has appeared in the meantime.

The present essay deals with the “Hajnal line” and the European east. In his 1965 essay Hajnal posited as fundamental an East-West difference in European marriage patterns, and in 1983 supplemented that distinction by adding household formation systems and life-cycle servitude to the characteristics of the division. Historians viewing this hypothesized “divide” from non-demographic viewpoints could easily recognize a kinship between the “Hajnal line” and other,
older, hypothesized East-West divisions. Perhaps the oldest of these was the “line” between “Western” and “Eastern” Christianity, the former stemming from Rome, the latter from the Byzantine Empire. Another, less sharply, demarcated East-West border was occasionally placed between the “Germanic” and “Slavic” worlds, with the European east the battleground between these mighty “civilizations.” In our own time, it could not escape notice that the “Hajnal line” bore an eerie resemblance to the line drawn by Winston Churchill in 1947 “from Stettin on the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic” – to announce the existence of an Iron Curtain and the beginning of the Cold War. None of these “lines” – old or new – fell precisely where Hajnal sought to place his. But the existence of the older and the modern hypothesized “lines” does suggest the presence, in thinking about the European continent, of the desire to achieve some kind of East-West separation. In its most egregious forms stemming from the Enlightenment period, the habit sometimes “invented” an Eastern Europe that by reference to standards of “Western civilization” fell far below the “advanced” West. In drawing his “line,” by contrast, Hajnal noted that his regionalization effort was done for the practical purpose of highlighting the differences in data sets and that “it is awkward to exclude Eastern Europe from Europe.”

In what follows we do three things. First, we survey the post-Hajnal literature on Eastern Europe, which, while not contradicting Hajnal’s proposition outright, nonetheless poses substantive questions about the division. In doing so, we review the benefits and liabilities of viewing Hajnal’s hypothesis as an analytic model at different levels of generalization. Second, we propose a new regional scheme for Eastern Europe, as distinct from Russia and Western Europe. Within Eastern Europe we see three subregions – Northern, Central, and Southeastern Europe – that possess an analytical integrity that Hajnal’s dichotomous division lacks. Third, and finally, we suggest that historians may profitably view the Hajnal line as the outcome of a process that had both geographic and temporal dimensions. We illustrate that process with a brief overview of changes in the agrarian regime of the Baltic.

Demarcating “Eastern Europe”
We are concerned mainly with the territory the “Hajnal line” crosses, or, better, lies athwart – an area of Europe that, until recently, was rather cavalierly referred to as “Eastern Europe.” As map 1 shows, viewed on a West-to-East axis, the area

lies between “Germanic” Central Europe and “Russia.” On a North-to-South axis, the region is harder to define, because at its extreme north lies Finland with its Scandinavian associations; and in the extreme south is Greece, with its classical past and Mediterranean associations. Drawing a straight line “from St. Petersburg to Trieste,” we see that the “Hajnal line,” at the start of the nineteenth century, crossed the Russian Baltic provinces of Livland and Courland (the third Baltic province, Estland, remained west of the line), and then headed south – still within the borders of the Russian Empire – through the Empire’s Lithuanian and Polish territories. It then crossed the border of the Russian and Habsburg Empires, continued south through the western provinces of the latter, and ended at Trieste on the Adriatic. By reference to the current boundaries of European states, however, the line starts in the Russian Federated Republic; crosses Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland; then the Czech Republic, Austria, Slovenia; and ends in Italy. In the pre-twentieth century era, the Hajnal division assigned lands west of this line to a larger region in which age at marriage tended to be high for both sexes and the proportion of people never married high as well; in which the
processes of family formation produced dominant proportions of simple, nuclear family households; and in which servitude involved young, unmarried persons and was a phenomenon of the individual life-cycle. East of the line lay territories in which marriage tended to be early for both sexes, relatively few persons did not marry, household formation processes tended to produce high proportions of complex family households, and servanthood was either non-existent or involved as many older married couples as it did the young.

Hajnal’s evidence for positing “typical” east-of-the-line patterns in his 1965 essay on “European marriage” tended to be drawn from more individual eastern lands than the evidence he used in his 1983 essay on household formation and service. In neither case, however, was the evidence evenly distributed – nor could it have been, given the state of research then – over the territories that the line meant to demarcate. Of course, it is in the nature of large-scale classifications that many places inevitably come be included into regions without reference to any evidence from these places themselves. Nonetheless, these regionalization efforts can only use evidence available at a given moment, and in neither 1965 nor 1983 was there a substantial body of evidence available for east-of-the-line territories.

We intend to problematize the “Hajnal line” in several ways. First, we note the research that has appeared since 1965-1983 about the territories “under” and “around” the line, and then ask whether this evidence requires that the line be rethought or readjusted. Second, we discuss whether a West-East division of this or some other kind might not best be viewed, as Hajnal himself suggested, as a time-bound phenomenon – a kind of Braudelian “structure of long duration” – the origins of which in the medieval centuries remain obscure, but the end of which was clearly visible by the mid-twentieth century. Third, on the basis of the same evidence, we will experiment to see whether a basic European division of this kind is still tenable or whether a new system of regionalization for the traditional European east is analytically better.

New Historical Evidence

The fact that the Hajnal line at the start of the nineteenth century cut through a landscape bearing a very different political nomenclature than the region had in the late twentieth century already suggests that the problem of obtaining continuous and comparable evidence here are likely to be major. This has proven to be the case for research on the ground. Even thirty-five years after Hajnal’s 1965 essay and seventeen after the 1983 essay, we still do not have a truly representative evidentiary base for a mapping of the eastern region on the three variables with which Hajnal was concerned – marriage patterns, household formation, and servanthood. Empirical research has produced interesting information on southeast Finnish family structures, from a region just northwest of St. Peters-
burg, but further work on the Baltic region of the Russian Empire has been frustrated by the absence, after 1850, of the excellent household-listing type of evidence from the Russian Imperial censuses, or soul revisions, carried out in the Empire between 1719 and 1859 (but in the Baltic only between 1782 and 1850).\footnote{Beatrice Moring, “Land, Labor, and Love: Household Arrangements in Nineteenth Century Eastern Finland. Cultural Heritage or Socio-Economic Structure?”, \textit{The History of the Family: An International Quarterly}, 4 (1999), 159-184; Beatrice Moring, “Geographical and Social Differences in Age at Marriage and Fertility in Finland During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries”, \textit{Scandinavian Population Studies}, 19 (1995), 249-259; and Andrejs Plakans and Charles Wetherell, “Family and Economy in an Early Nineteenth-Century Baltic Serf Estate”, \textit{Continuity and Change}, 7 (1992), 199-223.}

Poland is now represented in the English-language literature by several groundbreaking essays, which, however, do not cover the whole Polish-speaking region.\footnote{Cezary Kuklo, “Marriage in Pre-Industrial Warsaw in the Light of Demographic Studies”, \textit{Journal of Family History}, 15 (1990), 239-259; and Cezary Kuklo, “Typology of Households in the Polish Town of the Pre-Industrial Age”, \textit{Polish Population Review}, 10 (1997), 248-265.}

Historical-demographic and household-structural research on the Czech and Slovak region of the old Habsburg monarchy has made considerable headway in terms of specific places, but not in terms of the entire monarchy.\footnote{Markus Cerman, “Mitteleuropa und die ‘europäische Muster’: Heiratsverhalten und Familienstruktur in Mitteleuropa, 16-19. Jahrhundert”, in: Josef Ehmer, Tamara K. Hareven and Richard Wall (eds), \textit{Historische Familienforschung: Ergebnisse und Kontroversen} (Frankfurt: Campus 1997), 327-346, surveys both the findings and research for the Czech and Slovak lands.}

Work on the Austrian and Hungarian regions of the old Habsburg monarchy (from 1867 the Austro-Hungarian empire) has been prolific, as has been the research on the Balkan peninsula, but evidence about the Slovenian region – crossed by the Hajnal line just before it ends at Trieste, Italy – remains sparse.\footnote{For an excellent bibliography of recent work on the Habsburg monarchy see Ehmer, Hareven, and Wall (eds), \textit{Historische Familienforschung}; and Karl Kaser, \textit{Familie und Verwandtschaft auf dem Balkan: Analyse einer Untergehenden Kultur} (Vienna: Bohlan 1995).}

Hoch and Worobec have added solid monographs to the English-language literature on Russia proper, but, in the interim, new states – Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova – have come into being, calling into question the generalizability to the western borderlands of the old Empire of evidence drawn entirely from its central \textit{ethnic} Russian regions.\footnote{Steven L. Hoch, \textit{Serfdom and Social Control in Russia: Petrovskoe, A Village in Tambov} (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press 1986); and Christine D. Worobec, \textit{Peasant Russia: Family and Community in the Post-Emancipation Period} (Princeton: Princeton U. P. 1991).}

The evidentiary base for generalizations about Romania and Bulgaria remains relatively weak.\footnote{Since the areas directly west of the Hajnal line originally did not include Germany proper (except East Prussia), we omit consideration of it altogether.}
Furthermore, the disintegration of the old empires (Russian, Habsburg, Ottoman) after World War I, and, the further disintegration of multi-national states (USSR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia) after 1990, have made plain how political borders, and population surveys based on those borders, hid from view the region’s longstanding ethnic, linguistic, and national diversity. Research using evidence defined by political boundaries had difficulty disaggregating the evidence into sub-state or sub-provincial areas, and could therefore not test reliably whether or not ethnicity, nationality, or language was an important factor in shaping statistics on age of marriage and household formation. In one sense, the positing of a single “Eastern European” region has been an escape from these problems, because it has raised the discussion to a level at which the unknown, or the poorly understood, could also be put aside. Still, anyone well acquainted with the sub-state population configurations of Eastern European states would have reason to pause, for example, at tables that presented for the period around 1900 statistics of the “proportions single” for such countries as Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and, especially, “European Russia.”

What, ultimately, did it mean for a classification exercise to observe that in 1897 in “European Russia” 42 percent of males 20-29 were single, when the population of “European Russia” was numerically dominated by ethnic Russians, but included Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Ukrainians, and Belorussians, as well as the Jews in the old Pale of Settlement territories?

One thing is clear: little in the post-1983 research results about the territories under and around the Hajnal line speaks overwhelmingly against the line as drawn in the 1965 and 1983 essays. Put differently, had the Hajnal line been used to predict research outcomes for marriage patterns, household structures, and servanthood in Eastern European lands, the research results would have more or less confirmed. This remains true, however, only as long as we are willing to remain at the same level of generalization as Hajnal used. When we inquire about place-specific results, on the other hand, the picture becomes much less clear. Thus, for example, the evidence from the Russian Baltic provinces at the mid-nineteenth century shows incontrovertibly, first, that it was possible for the estate-based agricultural system there to sustain two different familial patterns in the same peasant population. A sub-population of farmhands never developed complex familial households, even though farmhands co-resided with farmstead’s head’s families in which the tendency to develop complexity was very strong. By contrast, farmstead heads and their fam-


ilies had a relatively high age at first marriage (normally the “Western” pattern), and exhibited a tendency toward household complexity (normally the “Eastern” pattern).\textsuperscript{15}

Elsewhere in the lands straddled by the Hajnal line there were less sharp contrasts within family systems than in the Baltic region, but at the community level the Hajnal line ceases to be a useful predictor. Thus in Hungarian lands – which lie decidedly east of the line – there were many communities in which household complexity was not noticeably greater than in regions of central Europe; nor was age at first marriage there uniformly low.\textsuperscript{16} The Hajnal line remains a good on-the-ground predictor for the Balkan peninsula, where strong tendencies toward household complexity and low marriage ages continued to exist well into the twentieth century. But as Maria Todorova and others have noted, these tendencies cannot be attributed to the entire Balkan region, especially if that region includes Romania and Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{17} In these lands, although marriage probably resembled the Hajnal “Eastern European” pattern, household formation systems and life-cycle servitude often did not.

Judging by the evidence that has emerged since the 1965-1983 period, there is therefore reason to think that a “line” may not be the best visual representation of a West-East divide on the three variables Hajnal postulated. Even if we grant that such a line is a good predictor of what appears on the ground west of it – and not all would accept even this proposition – it is an uneven predictor of what is likely to have been the case in the territories it crosses or those immediately to the east of it. The use of Russian evidence is particularly problematic, if it is allowed to stand for the on-the-ground situation in all of the European east. In his 1983 essay on household formation and servitude, Hajnal was careful in dealing with the Russian data, observing that it was the only data available from a large population where complex household formation is central, and adducing data from Croatia and Hungary to supplement his case. Yet his statement – after a review of the simple and joint household systems – that “there is much variation within each of the two basic kinds of system” appears to create a kind of a hierarchy of forms. There seem to be, in this line of thought, societies in which the joint household system is found to be more or less in “pure” form; and there are others in which it will be found diluted.\textsuperscript{18} In the discussion, there is no doubt that Northwestern Europe is the exemplar of the simple household system; while ethnic Russia is the best exemplar (to date) of the joint.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[15] Plakans and Wetherell, “Family and Economy”.
\item[17] Todorova, “Myth–Making in European Family History”.
\item[18] Hajnal, “Two Kinds of Pre-Industrial Household Formation System”, 71.
\end{footnotes}
There cannot be any objection to the use of ideal types of structures, as long as the discussion remains at a relatively high level of abstraction. When, however, the method is brought to the aid of the process of regionalization of assigning localities, communities, ethnically defined subpopulation, and entire provinces and nations to larger inclusive regions – there are problems and even dangers. Instead of becoming a spur to further research, which is the clear intention of such hypothetization, ideal types may indeed become a hindrance if researchers begin to assume that an understanding of the ideal type in the context of the population where it is best displayed is sufficiently informative for an understanding of that type’s variations elsewhere. The “variations” come to seem insufficiently worthy of time and effort. Entire populations can be swept into the region exemplified by the ideal type simply because they fall within the geographic area for which the ideal type is said to be a “tendency.” The procedure raises basic questions about the goals of historical research on family forms and the demographic aspects of family life. Is it to “map” Europe in all its variety, to achieve the simplest statement of variety by reducing it to several “basic” forms and their variations, or to use the variety of European family forms as an evidentiary base for understanding the dynamics of family life? If all three are taken to be worthy goals, are the procedures for implementing the three incompatible?

For historians, mapping family forms and demographic patterns remains an attractive goal. Although as much concerned with the history of familial formations as historical sociologists, historians are more interested in the particularisms of the past, and therefore more likely to become uneasy when evidence from the past is decontextualized. They tend also to become more quickly concerned with the causes and origins of particular phenomena, and are somewhat less interested in how a particular phenomenon is a variation of some ideal type of it – although this has generally not been the case with Hajnal’s line.

Accordingly, it is of some concern whether the Hajnal line has been placed correctly in light of what we do or don’t know about the lands it crosses, whether the line should be straight or meandering, or, indeed, whether it should be replaced by two parallel lines demarcating a zone. At the present, and in light of the evidence available about the European East, we judge the Hajnal line to be sufficiently informative only at a high level of generalization, markedly less so for mid-level general statements, and clearly unsatisfactory at the lowest level of generalization. That is, if the European continent is to be conceived of as having two large and inclusive areas, the line serves as a reasonably good predictor. If the continent is conceptualized, however, as multi-regional, then the line becomes genuinely problematic as a predictor as far as the traditional “eastern” lands are concerned. If it is meant to predict the characteristics of local communities, it is a poor predictor, because even in the “east” it is not difficult to find communities that do not exemplify the characteristics that Hajnal division would predict.
A Structure of Long Duration?

In his 1965 essay, Hajnal left the origins and end of West-East contrasts deliberately vague because the evidence allowed for no other strategy. In his 1983 essay Hajnal avoided the issue altogether. Judging by the 1965 essay, however, Hajnal believed that the discovered differences started in the medieval centuries and ended well before he wrote the essay. He highlighted evidence for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that already showed the differences, suggesting earlier origins. With respect to marriage ages, the West/low-East/high pairing Hajnal found lasting as long as World War II. Whatever combination of conditions in the European east that produced the particular tendencies may have been, they appear to have been active for at least four hundred years, ending sometime in the mid-twentieth century. By then, eastern patterns had come increasingly to resemble western ones, as household structure in the east was also more often than not simple, ages of marriages were later, and more people never married.

Assuming that in the European east we are in the presence of a “structure of long duration” – to use Braudel’s terminology – three questions become pertinent. First, can more be said about its origins? Second, what sustained the pattern over so long a period of time? Three, are there detectable changes in the pattern over time? That the evidence for answering these questions remains inadequate to this day suggests that research is still needed to put in place any kind of East-West boundary. But it also suggests that in thinking about the geographic anomalies of Hajnal’s division we need to ask about the a temporal dimension. We have to think, in other words, about East-West differences as outcomes of a process or processes.

The answer to the first question is complicated because the origins of “Eastern Europe” are themselves complicated. The political entities we have to deal with in the European east at the end of the medieval centuries and the beginning of the early modern era are, north to south, Muscovy, Poland-Lithuania, the Habsburg lands, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. Additional political actors joined this collection as time wore on – Sweden, the Russian Empire (a transformed Muscovy), Prussia; some, such as Hungary disappeared, having been absorbed by an expanding Habsburg Kingdom. Beneath these political designations there continued a very complicated mosaic of ethnic groupings and nationalities, as well as many different socio-economic regimes and differing areas of customary and statutory law.

To say that a particular pattern emerged at a given point throughout a large area so configured, particularly in the absence of clear evidence from the area itself, would strain credulity. At this juncture it is probably safer to say that we simply do not know when in the course of Eastern European history the detected patterns set in and achieved permanence. The only subpopulation for
which there is indirect medieval evidence – the Serbs – indeed shows early on the presence of a large proportion of joint family households. To make these characteristic of the entire European east would be again to claim too much.

Assuming that evidence from disparate localities showed repeatedly the persistence of the Eastern European patterns, can we detect in the region the continued existence over a long period of time of socio-economic and legal contexts that would have produced such structures repeatedly? On this score again the picture is very mixed. While it is true that in most of the territories described above the prevailing system of agricultural organization was the serf estate – the Gutsherrschaft – the internal structure of estates differed from place to place, and enserfed peasants were not typical throughout. Property rights for the peasantry also varied tremendously throughout the estate territories, ranging from those locales where peasant tenants paid money rents to the estate owner in return for what amounted to almost total ownership of the holding, to those where peasants owned virtually nothing and could barely claim right even to movable property. Over the whole region, estate-peasant property relationships were so varied that it is impossible to detect a single set of socio-economic relations as a generator of the Eastern European pattern.

As to the third question – changes in the Eastern European pattern during the time period it held sway – there are at least two problems. First, no time-series data are available for any Eastern European land for the entire time period; and, due to the relatively frequent border changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even the most recent past remains problematic in terms of census series of any kind. Second, because of the availability of only single-year enumerations separated unevenly by many years, it remains difficult to gauge if the variations from any single census represent genuine from the previous count. Direct evidence being scarce, indirect evidence would suggest that long-term changes were present, but that the nature of these has to be adduced from changes in the context in which marriage and household life was conducted. Since, as Hajnal observed, “the formation and composition of households are clearly linked to many aspects of the general functioning of society,” we suspect that the most telling changes in the Eastern European pattern, where it existed, came in the nineteenth century, rather than earlier. In the European East, the nineteenth century saw not only a series of serf emancipations (affecting many, but not all Eastern European territories), as well as varied land reforms, all of these enlarging the freedom of action and choice for peasant families. It was also in the nineteenth century that the lands of Eastern Europe, though still “backward” in relation to Western European countries, were increasingly drawn into a

continent-wide, and even international, economic system, which increased the per-capita incomes of rural families. The specific household-level consequences of such changes, however, remain inadequately explored.

**An Eastern European Region**  

Clearly, the phrase “the European East” is no longer as useful as it once was when we knew little about the familial dimensions in the territories it pointed to. Moreover, research on other European regions has displayed the many different ways – other than geographic – through which *subpopulations* can be postulated. Mitterauer, for example, following Lööfgren, has suggested that the notion of *ecotypes* – plains, mountains, valleys, and seacoasts in combination with differing modes of production – should be incorporated into explanations of family variation. Similarly, uniformity of family values may be enhanced by linguistic identity, because family-level information is more likely to circulate among those who share the same language. The *state*, too, may both provide continuity and explain diversity, as Charles Tilly has suggested; moreover, the term *state* need not be limited to nation-state, but can also be defined as a province, a metropolitan area, a rural district, or a village – in fact any collectivity with a government. It is also conceivable that the most relevant unit could be a *culture*, defined variously by linguistic criteria or religion; and that *culture* could include the subordinate category of *subculture*, as, for example, a national minority. Both *class* (bourgeois, proletariat) and *status group* (aristocrat, serf, guild member) remained relevant categories for the European East well into the twentieth century, especially in those areas where different law codes regulated the lives of each. Then there is the *region* – the Balkans, the Baltic, European Russia – which may yet prove to have determinative force. Finally, there is the concept of *social network*, which defines a human group socially but not necessarily geographically, and may refer not to permanent configurations but

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ones that change constantly in response to forces ranging from the life cycle to shifting labor and marriage markets.26

Against this background, the Hajnal line in the European east looks increasingly problematic. The Princeton European Fertility Project (henceforth EFP) conducted the only examination of European nuptiality that came close to being a test of the line. Although part of a larger effort to chart the course of the secular decline of fertility in Europe from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the EFP presented its analysis of nuptiality cartographically in ways that allow us to revisit Hajnal’s demarcation. The EFP summarized nuptiality with a single measure, \( Im \), which represents the proportions of females, 15-49, who were married relative to a baseline population of Hutterite women who have one of the highest and most reliable records of fertility.27 By EFP measures, an \( Im \) of .500 would indicate that the proportion of females, 15-49, married was half that of the Hutterites. Similar indexes captured general (\( I_f \)) and marital (\( I_g \)) fertility. By way of a series of maps, the EFP presented its findings on the magnitude and geographical distribution of fertility and nuptiality in continental Europe and the British Isles from 1830 to 1960. Substantively, the EFP designated a basic division in \( Im \) at .550, and the spatial distribution of \( Im \) on both sides of that value showed “the remarkable validity of Hajnal’s designation of a line from Trieste to St. Petersburg as the boundary west of which marriage was late and proportions remaining single high.”28 With respect to proportions married, the province-level evidence for the period around 1870 is persuasive, and the maps dealing with \( Im \) are a visually striking demonstration of a continental divide.29

Yet when we shift from the aggregate measures to the populations being measured and ask who is being separated from whom, we get a rather different view. Geographically, we are dealing with a behavioral boundary that in 1870 cut across the political boundaries of the Russian Empire and its provinces of Belarus, the Ukraine, and Moldavia, as well as the territories inhabited by Poles. Further south, it implicates the peoples, who, in 1870, were living in the eastern reaches of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, but after the First World War would be residents of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania. A list of the identifiable nationality groups that the boundary touched is longer still, and the histories of each of these territories include ethnic sub-populations that may have remained invisible to enumerators but were

nonetheless a living reality of their compatriots and may have played a role in
demarcating marriage markets and thereby influencing \( Im \). Though meant to
convey comprehensible divisions in the values of \( Im \), historians have understood
the resulting line as separating areas and peoples, relegating some to the “West”
and some to the “East.” We do not reject the EFP’s taxonomy entirely; we are, how-
ever, looking to see what emerges when the numbers are aggregated differently.

27. \( Im \) is one of the three central measures that Ansley Coale developed and which the EFP used. (i) the index of
general fertility, \( If \), (2) the index of marital fertility, \( Ig \), and (3) the index of proportions married, \( Im \), are defined
as follows.

\[
\begin{align*}
If &= \frac{B}{w_i \times G_i}, \\
Ig &= \frac{BL}{m_i \times G_i}, \\
Im &= \frac{m_i \times G_i}{w_i \times G_i},
\end{align*}
\]

where \( B \) is the total number of births, \( BL \) is the number of legitimate births, \( w \) is the number of women, \( m \) is
the number of married women, \( G \) is the age-specific fertility of married Hutterite women, and \( I \) represents the
standard five year age cohorts from 15-49 (15-19, 20-24 . . . 44-49). Interpretively, \( If \) and \( Ig \) may be read as the
proportions of Hutterite general and marital fertility that another population achieves; \( Im \), the proportion of
women married relative to Hutterite women. Importantly, in populations with little or no illegitimacy, the iden-
tity \( Im \times Ig = If \) allows the contributions of nuptiality and marital fertility to overall fertility to be assessed. The
index of proportions married, \( Im \), may be refined as \( Im^* \).

\[
Im^* = \frac{G_i (m_i / w_i)}{G_i},
\]

to neutralize differences attributable to variations in age structure. The Hutterites, an Anabaptist sect that set-
tled in the upper u.s. and lower Canada in the late nineteenth-century, have a reliable record of fertility between
1921 and 1930 that is “close to the theoretical maximum of human fertility for all but the 15-19 age group”
(Joseph W. Eaton and Albert J. Mayer, Man’s Capacity to Reproduce: The Demography of a Unique Population
(Glencoe, Ill.: Glencoe Press 1954), 1-2). Henry first noted the Hutterites in his search for “natural” fertility pop-
adopted Hutterite fertility as the foundational schedule for his indexes and the EFP. Ansley Coale, “Factors Asso-
Coale”,The Decline of Fertility in Europe from the French Revolution to World War II”, in: S. J. Behrman and
Leslie Corsa (eds), Fertility and Family Planning: A World View (Ann Arbor, mi: University of Michigan Press
1969), 3-24; and Ansley Coale and Roy Treadway, “A Summary of the Changing Distribution of Overall Fertility,
Marital Fertility, and the Proportion Married in the Provinces of Europe”, in: Ansley Coale and Susan Cotts

28. Coale and Treadway, “A Summary of the Changing Distribution”, 48-52. The central value .550 is actually
the median value of \( Im \) for 684 provinces, districts, and national regions in the 27 countries that the EFP ana-
alyzed. We used the EFP’s Thirty-Year Summary Data File, available from the Office of Population Research,
Princeton University. Coale reiterated his confidence in the Hajnal division in Ansley Coale, “Age of Entry into
Marriage and the Date of the Initiation of Voluntary Birth Control”, Demography 29 (1992), 333-335.

Consider, for example, what emerges when we look at the values of $Im$ for 1870 in those lands that the Hajnal line separates. Starting in the north with Finland and the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire, we note, first, that provinces of the Grand Duchy of Finland are characterized by low and moderate values of $Im$ (.401-.550), with no discernible north-south or east-west pattern. The Gulf of Bothnia is not a telling border because the values of $Im$ are similar to those in the northeastern provinces of Sweden. Second, the area southwest of St. Petersburg has $Im$s similar to central Finland the Baltic provinces of the Empire – Estland, Livland, and Kurland – as well as Kovno province directly south of the Baltic provinces. The lower levels of $Im$ in Finland and the Baltic provinces, including Kovno, resemble those of the Northeastern districts of the Polish region, thus creating a ring around the Baltic sea in which levels of $Im$ do not exceed .550. While a line might be drawn on the easternmost borders of the Baltic ring, it is certainly fair to ask of why it could not be drawn on the easternmost borders of the provinces adjacent to the Baltic, since $Im$s are just a shade higher that those of the Baltic ring.$^{30}$ Thus, while the EFP surely suggests that a “line” can be drawn, we need meaningful geographical divisions for $Im$ that can accommodate the half-continent thus created east of that Hajnal line.

This suggests that Hajnal’s dichotomous notion of Western and Eastern Europe is difficult to sustain empirically except at a high level of generalization. But, perpetuated by Hajnal’s forceful statement, by the work of the Cambridge

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$^{30}$ At the same time, the distribution of $Im$, with its mean of .529 and a standard deviation of .125, means that more than two-thirds of all cases would fall between .404 and .654; in other words, within the EFP’s five central categories. $Im$, however, may not be normally distributed, and may actually have a bi-modal distribution. Measures of central tendency, such as the mean and median, should thus be viewed cautiously.
Group on household size and composition, and by the EFP itself, a relatively simple conception of East-West differences has persisted. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting national and ethnic upheavals have done much not only to dispel notions of Eastern Europe as a behavioral monolith, but also to focus efforts on both documenting and analyzing behavioral differences within Eastern Europe itself. As an exercise in this vein, we have developed the notion of an Eastern Europe zone with Northern, Central, and Southern subzones.

The EFP itself constructed regions based upon nationality and language, which are given in table 1. The correspondence between these regions and differences in Im, however, are not completely satisfying, as the divisions account for only 64 percent of the variation of Im in 1870 (r = .80). Although not an particularly bad fit, especially since the variation in Im is relatively small, the EFP regions reflect an understandable ambivalence about the proper basis of classification. Moreover, the divisions also reflect a sensitivity to Western rather than Eastern Europe. While French speaking provinces of Belgium and Switzerland
are included in French Europe, the Latvian-, Estonian-, and German-speaking peoples of the Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia are relegated to a large and undifferentiated Russia. Using EFP data, we can construct a preliminary formulation of regions that both better explains variation in $Im$ and organizes the area around the Hajnal line into meaningful geographic divisions. Table 2 provides a listing of EFP areas that we have reorganized into three sub-regions along with mean values of $Im$. Our particular reconfiguration of the EFP regions, excluding French Europe and the exceptionally varied Mediterranean, moreover, accounts for nearly 80 percent of the variation in $Im$ ($= .889$) in the six major European regions of Central and Northwest Europe, Scandinavia, Northern, Central, and Southern Eastern Europe, and Russia.

Although far from perfect, a re-conceptualization of Eastern Europe as a region with three sub-regions allows the area to be examined in its own right. As has been very clear to historians who deal with the European east, this linguistically and culturally layered region, with its continually changing political boundaries, its mixture of plains and mountains, and its array of free and unfree peasants, cannot be properly understood by reference to models based on national societies with comparatively well-integrated populations and relatively stable national boundaries, such as Ireland, England, or France. By reconceptualizing the region of Eastern Europe in three sub-regions that reflect political, cultural, and linguistic identities and minimize within group differences in $Im$, we contend that historians have a better geographical foundation for analyzing historical demography and family life.

**The Hajnal Line as Process**

Finally, we must reconsider the passage of time. For the most part researchers have understood the Hajnal line as separating long-standing marital and household regimes. As such, Hajnal’s division constitutes a snapshot of historical behavior of substantial temporal stability and breadth. Yet both Western and Eastern Europe underwent massive change during these 400 or so years, and historians invariably talk about large-scale social and economic developments and about how these have reshaped the nature and character of family and household life. At the same time, researchers have rarely talked about household

31. Variation in $Im$ itself can be used to construct divisions. Any number of categories might be imposed, although the EFP’s twelve exhaust the range of difference and so represent a maximum number. Because we are especially interested in continental Europe, excluding Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, and Iceland seems reasonable. Restricting the number of categories to even three bears fruit, as a clustering of $Im$ into three groups accounts for 87 percent of the variation in $Im$ in 574 provinces, districts, and regions in 20 countries. The three groups, representing low, moderate, and high levels of $Im$ cluster about means of .431 ($s = .042$), .568 ($s = .043$), and .717 ($s = .052$) respectively.
tendencies on either side of the line as the outcome of a process, save in relation to departures from general tendencies such as urbanization.\textsuperscript{32} We believe that this is an unfortunate tendency and we suggest that researchers would profit from conceptualizing the differences between Western and Eastern households systems as outcomes of processes rather than as stable states. Even if stability was a macro-feature of household systems, enough disparity exists in both Western and Eastern Europe to warrant thinking differently.

There are at least two major advantages to this perspective. First, it gives Hajnal’s divisions a history. It allows researchers to seek out the root causes of the differences and so begin to view whatever regional variations existed as distinct outcomes of concrete social, economic, and cultural processes. Anomalies to Hajnal’s Western or Eastern systems can then be investigated in their own right, and placed in sharper comparative perspective on both sides of the line. Historians could also reattach cultural propensities toward complex or nuclear households to circumstances on the ground and evaluate the force of changes in those circumstances at low (local) or intermediate (regional) levels of generalization. As we have argued, Hajnal’s line has interpretive power only at the highest (continental) level of generalization, and that his generalization loses much of its force on the intermediate (regional) level. Second, approaching household systems as outcomes would place variations in a more positive light. Departures from Hajnal’s broad tendencies would no longer carry the connotation of abnormal deviations or idiosyncrasies, but rather as genuine variations in either local or regional conditions. All this, of course, is nothing really new, but it provides researchers the opportunity to revisit such matters as the impact of capitalism, the importance of individualism and collectivism, and different land systems which Hajnal’s distinction renders largely irrelevant. To illustrate the utility of our view, we offer a broad sketch of the changes in household tendencies in the Baltic as the outcome of changes in agrarian regimes.

In a wide ranging essay on how the history of the Western nuclear family has been viewed, Daniel Scott Smith has argued that the principle of neolocality – the imperative to form independent households at marriage – is the essence of the Northwest European model, which, itself, constitutes Hajnal’s Western European household system.\textsuperscript{33} No such imperative existed in the Baltic area, but the


question, of course, is why? Whether complex households, a high incidence of co-resident kin, universal marriage, and low ages of marriage stemmed largely from cultural values, or whether these behaviors resulted from social and economic conditions remains a basic question. We cannot answer the question with finality, but the history of changes in the land and labor systems in the Baltic may provide a key. Indeed, in our view, a major reason for the absence of neolocal behavior in the Baltic can be found in the constraints on independent household formation imposed by the estate agrarian regime, which existed there from the sixteenth century until the early twentieth century. Our research reveals that observable changes in household living arrangements occurred between 1850 and 1930, and that these followed, rather than preceded, major land reforms. As the Baltic provinces moved to end serfdom in the early nineteenth century, establish private property rights for peasants after 1850, and redistribute agricultural land in the 1920s, households shifted away from complex and toward nuclear forms. The chronology was broadly as follows.

From the early seventeenth century until the first third of the nineteenth serfdom prevailed in the Baltic region. The fundamental unit of agriculture was the estate, which itself was divided into peasant and estate (demesne) lands. Peasants occupied individual farmsteads and held usufruct rights to residency. At least in part to gather sufficient labor to work both estate and their own holdings, peasant households consisted of both the family of farmstead heads and unrelated individuals (farmhands). Household composition changed predictably over the life cycle, but the size of farmstead households remained roughly the same at most times. Falling below the optimal size of perhaps eleven to twelve people jeopardized the head’s ability to render labor dues and provide for the farmstead. At virtually all times, however, farmstead heads worked to gather enough farmhands in residence to protect their own families, and to the extent


possible co-resident kin, from corvée labor obligations. With emancipation, which occurred in the Baltic provinces between 1816 and 1819, peasants now shifted to a system of labor rents in exchange for the right to occupy the farmsteads they had worked under serfdom.

Critically, the size and number of farmsteads changed little over the course of two and a half centuries. Farmsteads listed in the Russian imperial census or “soul revision” of 1850 for the estate of Pinkenhof (in what is now Latvia), for example, can be found on a 1634 map (of what was then Livonia or Livland). The farmstead system almost completely eliminated the opportunity to establish independent households at marriage because individual farmsteads, which averaged slightly more than fifty acres in Livonia, and 100 acres in wheat-growing Kurland, could not be subdivided into smaller productive units. Moreover, movement out of the estate was severely constrained until the mid-nineteenth century, so that those peasants who were not farmstead heads or their co-resident kin – between 55 and 60 percent of estate populations – could only move about within the estate according to the labor needs of established farmsteads. Farmhands, moreover, did not live in independent households on farmsteads, but in the household of the farmstead head.

The essential indivisibility of peasant land acted as a fundamental constraint on forming independent households. The attending labor systems of, first, corvée labor and, second, labor rents promoted a protectionist strategy on the part of farmstead heads that demanded complexity in living arrangements. Some peasants had the opportunity of forming nuclear family households on subsidiary holdings, but these were invariably smaller than full-fledged farmsteads and never constituted more than 10 percent of peasant-operated holdings after emancipation. The population of farmhand families that farmsteads could not absorb ended up living on the main estate farm, or Hof. Socially, the estate agrarian regime created a two-tiered peasant society: a privileged minority of farmstead heads and their families, and a majority of landless peasants who moved from farm to farm, often on a yearly basis, as single men and women or in small conjugal family units. The movement of groups occurred regularly, but once a family secured a farmstead headship, it tended to hold it for a generation or more. Life chances for a 20 year old male succeeding to the headship of a farmstead were no better than one in four. After emancipation, new pressures to succeed economically, restrictions of migration, and the failure to break up estate lands perpetuated complex households. Indeed, in Pinkenhof, average farmstead size actually increased from 11.2 ($s = 2.8$) in 1816 to 13.6 ($s = 5.0$) in 1850. Here we can see a small but real alteration in household size in response to new conditions created by changes in the land system.

In the second half of the nineteenth century peasants acquired private property rights. In 1849 the Livonian nobility passed a temporary reform measure that permitted peasants to purchase the holdings they had been working on the basis of labor rents. This law was made permanent in 1860 in Livland, and in 1863 in Kurland. Aggregate land sales in Kurland suggest that virtually all private farmsteads that had been in estate hands in 1850 were in peasant hands by 1900.37 By 1905, 38.0 percent of all arable land in Kurland, and 37.0 percent in Livland, was in the hands of peasant owner-operators. Estate owners still controlled the majority of agricultural land and roughly four-fifths of all peasant families in Kurland and Livland remained “landless.”

The land reforms of the 1920s, after the Latvian territories gained independence and became the Republic of Latvia, were more sweeping. Between 1919 and 1937, 4.2 million acres passed into private hands after confiscation of large state and private holdings; and this was in addition to the vast majority of pre-reform farms that peasants had purchased in the nineteenth century. As there were only about 14.8 million acres of cultivated land in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania combined, those 4.2 million acres represented an enormous share of the available land in the region.38 More than a third of all redistributed parcels went specifically to create new farms, and another fifth went to supplement existing farms. Thus almost two thirds of all new parcels went to create new farms or to augment older, undoubtedly smaller farms. Fully three-quarters of those receiving land had been landless prior to reform.

The reforms of the 1920s created more small holdings than ever before. Because the sales in the 1870s and 1880s transferred ownership of existing farmsteads to peasants, the holdings tended to be relatively large. More than 80 percent of all new holdings were between 25 and 54 acres; more than half were between 40 and 54 acres. Provisions of reforms, moreover, put a ceiling on the amount of land that could be inherited at 50 hectares, or 123 acres, thereby prohibiting the accumulation of land and the development of any economies of scale. More important, the distribution of new land holdings logically created


pressure that worked to make multiple family households less feasible and small, nuclear family farms more attractive.

The impact of the 1920s reforms on household size was profound. A census of 1935 records information of the size of households in 516 rural districts in the Latvia’s four new regions, Kurzeme, Latgale, Vidzeme, and Zemgale. Kurzeme and Zemgale together comprised the old province of Kurland, and Vidzeme was Livland, without the Estonian speaking districts in the north. Slightly more the 80 percent of the 225,496 households enumerated were farm households. More than 60 percent contained fewer than 6 people. Another third numbered between 6 and 10, and less than five percent of all households contained more than 11 people. Considering that the mean household size was 13.6 in Pinkenhof in 1850, and 12.2 in Kurland in 1881, the change was nothing short of staggering. Moreover, the absence of other major developments such as industrialization leads us to conclude that, more than any other factor, land reform decreased household size in Latvia by at least 50 percent. Given such modest sizes, the household complexity that had prevailed earlier simply could not have existed to the degree it had even in the late nineteenth century.

Neither the rapidity nor the lateness of the change in household size should obscure our point that household systems have a history which can be analyzed. The particular conditions of the Baltic region – in this case, land reform – clearly worked to alter the basic living arrangements of the majority of the population at different times. Whether or not peasants welcomed the shift from complex to nuclear family households in the 1920s remains to be seen, as does whether other regions and household systems were subject to similar histories. Yet by dropping below Hajnal’s Eastern and Western division to uncover mechanisms that first supported and then undermined the Baltic’s “Eastern European” household system, we have discovered much. We can only hope that other researchers of Eastern Europe will heed our call to move beyond, and below, Hajnal’s great divide.
7

South of the Hajnal line. Italy and Southern Europe

Pier Paolo Viazzo
1. Introduction

In his 1982 paper on “Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system”, John Hajnal confidently emphasized the distinctiveness of the Northwestern European system characterized by late marriage for both men and women, neolocal residence resulting in the dominance of simple family households, and high proportions of young people circulating between households as servants. He had little doubt that east of the imaginary line running from St. Petersburg to Trieste, in Eastern Europe and in Asia, marriage had been much earlier and people had tended to live in joint family households.\(^1\) The status of Southern Europe was, however, less clear. In his previous essay of 1965 he had surmised that significant departures from the European pattern of late and restricted marriage “may probably be found not only as one proceeds eastward but on the southern edge of Europe as well”\(^2\); and in 1982 he had ingeniously demonstrated, drawing on the evidence provided by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy\(^3\), that fifteenth-century Tuscany displayed a joint household formation system remarkably similar to the ones documented for twentieth-century China and India. Nevertheless, he suspected that there might be in Southern Europe household formation systems that did not conform to the Northwest European rules, but that were probably much more similar to the Northwest European systems than were the joint household systems (for example, there probably were some ‘life-cycle’ servants). The way in which the distinctiveness of Northwest European household formation system has been presented in this paper may have to be modified when Southern European systems have been thoroughly studied.\(^4\)

Writing in the same years, both Richard Smith and Peter Laslett were also impressed by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber’s analysis of the Tuscan catasto (cadastre) of 1427, which revealed – in compliance with Hajnal’s rules – that women were very young when they were given in marriage, that hardly any woman remained definitely celibate, and that neolocal arrangements were rare and people tended to live in joint families in which the presence of servants was negligi-

ble. They noticed, however, that especially in the towns the age gap between spouses was considerable: on marriage women took husbands who were eight to ten years their senior. They also observed that in fifteenth-century Tuscany the prevalence of joint family households was associated with the economic dominance of the sharecropping system of *mezzadria*.

These findings raised a crucial problem of interpretation, namely whether the Tuscan *catasto* merely recorded the local variant of a medieval pattern common to the whole of Europe or rather demonstrated the existence of a distinctive pattern of long standing. The first results to emerge from the few family reconstitution studies available at that time on Southern European localities, along with scattered evidence gleaned from the historical, demographic and anthropological literature, led Smith and Laslett to argue that the system found in fifteenth-century Tuscany, far from being representative of a medieval stage in the evolution of the European family, was actually typical of a Mediterranean pattern which had basically persisted throughout the modern age up to the nineteenth century. This pattern was presumably rooted both in cultural features specific to the Mediterranean area such as the importance accorded to female honor and in economic factors such as the wide diffusion of the sharecropping system, which was “especially important in encouraging marriage for the contracts between landlord and tenant required a complete family to cultivate a holding.”

The virtually simultaneous publication of the four influential papers by Smith (1981), Laslett (1983) and Hajnal (1982, 1983) spurred a tremendous growth of research on Southern European marriage and family patterns. Taken together, they outlined for Mediterranean Europe a model of family organization which was significantly different from the one that had been constructed for the Northwest. Testing the “Mediterranean model” rapidly became one of the prime goals of research for the expanding community of historical demographers and family historians working on Southern Europe, and already by the early 1990s it was clear that the results yielded by a decade of unrelenting investigation were contradicting many, or most, of the generalizations and predictions advanced by Hajnal, Smith and Laslett.


The critics of the “Mediterranean model” were able to show, first of all, that in pre-industrial times Southern Europe had exhibited an unsuspected degree of regional and sub-regional variability which, as one of them wrote, “would surprise most students of Northern Europe.”\(^8\) It was undeniable that in many areas women (and, often, men as well) had married young; but in other areas marriage had been as late and restricted as in Northwestern Europe. The geography of family forms had been equally checkered: both in Iberia and in Italy nuclear family households had predominated in the south, whereas complex family households had apparently prevailed in the north. What is more, the evidence piling up for Southern Europe was casting serious doubts on the validity of the set of functional interconnections which Hajnal, Smith and Laslett had postulated between late marriage, neolocality and life-cycle service. In Spain and Portugal as well as in Italy, it had been in the southern regions, where neolocality and nuclear families had been the norm, that women had married young, whereas in the northern regions characterized by higher proportions of complex family households marriage age had been closer to northwestern levels. And, ironically, life-cycle servants had been more numerous in the joint family households of central Italian sharecroppers than in the nuclear family households of southern Italian peasants.\(^9\)

Over the past fifteen years or so these findings from Southern Europe have been repeatedly, and very effectively, produced as damning evidence of the substantive and theoretical inadequacy of what is commonly referred to as the “Hajnal/Laslett model.” Besides fulfilling Hajnal’s prophecy that the way in

which he had presented the distinctiveness of the Northwest European system might need to be modified in the light of more careful and extended studies of Southern European systems, these findings suggested that “the whole enterprise of branding major areas of Europe as having a particular type of household system” was misleading. Instead of looking for broad regional uniformities, the crucial task of family historians was to develop a more comprehensive approach where political economic, demographic, ecological and cultural factors were to be taken into account in order properly to address “the basic question of what determines co-residential arrangements in any time or place.”

The recent publication of three major and in many ways definitive general works on marriage and the family in Italy, Spain and Portugal, which at last present in a systematic manner the results of nearly two decades of research, would seem to indicate that the main substantive and theoretical questions about Southern European household formation systems are basically settled. That this is not the case has been demonstrated by an even more recent, and highly stimulating, article by David Reher. What is most surprising in this article is that Reher abandons the usual path trodden by most specialists of the area. Whereas scholars like Kertzer, Brettell, Rowland, Barbagli, Benigno and many others (including Reher himself) had emphasized the regional and sub-regional diversity of Southern Europe, he now reproposes a stark North/South boundary separating two fundamentally homogeneous culture areas. A less striking, but theoretically no less important and innovative feature of Reher’s article is his intimation that research should focus attention especially on the moment of transition when young people left home and on the way in which the family organized support for its most vulnerable members. While many scholars are likely to take issue with Reher’s theses on the historical existence and contemporary persistence of strong contrasts between Northern and Southern Europe, this intimation seems symptomatic of a changing way of looking at family life advocated by an increasing number of students in the field.

If Reher’s article will no doubt rekindle the debate on European family forms from within, exciting new perspectives are also being provided from without. Severe criticisms of the “Hajnal/Laslett model” have recently arrived from

11. Ibid., 157.
Asia, or have at least been formulated adopting a Eurasian vantage point. In a series of important articles dealing mainly with Northern India, Monica Das Gupta has argued that profound differences do in fact exist between the two kinds of household formation system identified by Hajnal. She contends, however, that Hajnal has failed to specify some major implications of the two systems concerning in particular women’s autonomy and mortality and health outcomes, and that some of Hajnal’s conclusions about the nuptiality and fertility implications of the two systems are also to be challenged. Moreover, she believes that crucial differences are to be found not only – or not so much – between Western Europe and the European and Asian East but also within Asia. Das Gupta’s evidence is therefore relaunching in a refined, more testable form Wolf and Hanley’s famous and provocative formula that “China is to Japan as Eastern is to Western Europe” – which amounts to saying that in terms of household formation systems the East is not as different from Western Europe as Hajnal had implied since both Europe and Asia display internal differences and, indeed, “West-European” patterns have been documented in Asia.

In a quite different vein, the thesis that the East and the West are not as different as suggested by Hajnal has also been put forward with characteristic vigour by Jack Goody in a series of works now spanning a quarter of a century. His objections to the “Hajnal/Laslett model”, although already expressed in his previous studies, have become sharper and increasingly explicit in the last few years. Especially in his 1996 article in *Population and Development Review* – the journal in which Hajnal’s 1982 paper was originally published – he asserts that Hajnal’s “rules” are better treated as variables, that the supposedly big differences found between Western and Eastern family systems are actually minor variations on a single Eurasian theme and that the so much


vaunted uniqueness of Western household structure (and Western society) is therefore a myth.

The new perspectives opened up by this Eurasian debate are to be welcomed by students of European family forms not only because they reinforce that bridge between historical and anthropological investigation which has proved so fruitful in family history, but also because they broaden the scope of a field of research that was gradually becoming rather parochial owing to its exclusively European focus. It is to be remarked, however, that in these changed circumstances Southern Europe has so far received less than her fair share of attention as those engaged in the Eurasian debate have concentrated more on comparing Northwestern European “with Eastern European or non-European populations than on detailing north-south differences within Europe.” Yet, there are clearly good reasons for Southern Europe – and Italy in particular – to be taken properly into account in the context of the Eurasian debate.

Why Italy? One good reason is that since the early days of family history the heterogeneity of family forms and marriage patterns in the Italian peninsula has bedeviled attempts to extend generalizations to the whole of Western Europe. In the early 1980s David Kertzer had contended that “no generalization regarding family life and co-residence in Western Europe can be made until the Italian case is well understood.” A few years later, he was even more drastic in remarking that “modern Italy has become a burial ground for many of the most ambitious, and well-known, theories of household and marriage systems proposed by historians, sociologists, and demographers.” But another good reason – indeed a better one in a Eurasian context – is of course that in his pathbreaking essays of 1982 and 1983 Hajnal demonstrated the similarities between the “oriental” system of household formation (exemplified by India and China) and the system documented for fifteenth-century Tuscany by the 1427 catasto. As a consequence Tuscany, and Italy, have figured rather more prominently in the Eurasian debate than the rest of Southern Europe. However, treatment of Italy has generally been cursory and almost invariably limited to the paradigmatic case of Renaissance Tuscany.

A curious feature of the Eurasian debate is that, although the Tuscan case

is commonly taken as representative of Southern Europe, and a sort of equation is therefore established between southern Europe and the Asian joint family systems analyzed by Hajnal, the starting point for comparison tends to remain Wolf and Hanley’s formula – “China (or India) is to Japan as Eastern Europe is to Western Europe” – when, following Hajnal’s own indications, it should be changed to “China (or India) is to Japan as Southern Europe is to Northwestern Europe”, thereby pointing to the existence of analogous differences west of the Hajnal line. Once the formula has been so rephrased, however, one immediately stumbles across the familiar classificatory problem: what is (what should we mean by) “Southern Europe”? This may look a threadbare, possibly hopeless and sterile question. Nevertheless, I think that especially in a Eurasian perspective some words about Mediterranean Europe, and her ambiguous status between the primitive and the civilized, are in order. Moreover, as I shall suggest, it may be that some “Mediterranean” characters of Southern Europe help explain certain puzzling features of Southern European family life.

After dealing with the definitional problem, I will briefly survey the data that have emerged from Southern Europe to see whether they have confirmed or rejected the Hajnal hypothesis, starting from the two classic issues of marriage age and household composition. Several scholars have argued, however, that a major limitation of the Hajnal/Laslett model lies in its adoption of post-marital residence and household-demographic attributes as the sole diagnostic elements of household systems. One way of shifting the terms of the debate is, as Reher has suggested, to focus attention on the moment of transition when young people left home. Such a shift implies that the vexed question of service and servanthood is given renewed importance. It is worth remembering that David Kertzer and Caroline Brettell, in a landmark article of 1987 in which they took stock of the advances recently made in Italian and Iberian family history, stated that in Southern Europe

a tremendous number [of children] left at a tender age in order to enter some form of service (...) we now know that in many parts of southern Europe it was common for boys and girls to leave their parental home around age twelve to work in service for a wealthier (or less poor) family.23

In a similar vein, Goody now asserts that the notion that life-cycle service was exclusive to Northwest Europe is just an ethnocentric myth, as demonstrated by the fact that “servants existed in Asia.”24 Goody does not mention any southern European evidence, but if servants in Italy, Spain and Portugal were really as

numerous as suggested by Kertzer and Brettell, then his argument would obviously be strengthened.

Over the last decade, however, the growing interest in the history of aging has also led a number of family historians to argue that we should shift from a youth-centered viewpoint to a perspective from the later years of life, and to predict that if treatment of the elderly in the past is selected as the most important diagnostic element, then our historical geography of household systems will be profoundly changed. Accordingly, in the last section of this chapter I will examine the position of the elderly in Southern European households, the treatment they received and their ways of “stepping down”. At the same time, I will suggest that a richer perception of family life in Southern Europe is gained when, in addition to the young and the elderly, the very young are also taken into consideration. Indeed, a focus on the first stage of the individual life course is likely to shed new light on the central question of the varying significance of the help provided to the most vulnerable categories in society by charitable institutions against the alternative represented by the family as a source of informal support.

2. Defining southern Europe
Threadbare and hopeless as it may be, the classificatory problem of what we should mean by “southern Europe” is hardly one that can be escaped in a broad comparative context. In his recent paper Reher has adopted an intriguing plurality of definitions: “Southern Europe” is treated as synonymous with “Mediterranean Europe” and is said to refer “mainly to Portugal, Spain, and Italy, although at times (...) southern France and Greece are included as well”; but “Southern” and “Mediterranean” Europe are also taken as largely synonymous with “Latin” (vs. Germanic) Europe and with “Catholic Europe.” It is still difficult to say whether this is a crude way of solving an intractable classificatory problem or, rather, a useful step towards a “polythetic” classification: after all, “Southern”, “Mediterranean”, “Latin” and “Catholic” Europes display undeniable family likenesses, to use Wittgenstein’s term, which cannot be properly encompassed if we continue to search for clear-cut (monothetic) classification. Whatever the merits of his classificatory devices, what is certain is that the boundaries of Southern Europe drawn by Reher differ considerably from those that have traditionally marked Mediterranean Europe in the anthropological literature.

In an article of 1963 on “The Old World Peoples: The Place of European


Cultures in World Ethnography”, Conrad Arensberg, one of the great pioneers of Europeanist anthropology, stated that: “[r]ather than Spanish as such, the Andalusians are better classified with, for instance, Sicilians and others, more of whose ways they share, as Mediterraneans; while the Gallegos and the Basques are better classified with others to the north as peoples of the Atlantic fringe.”

A relevant point is that Arensberg, while granting family structures a fundamental importance in social organization, fails to indicate a prevalence of joint family households as a distinguishing feature of Andalusians, Sicilians and other Mediterraneans vis-à-vis Gallegos, Basques or any other peoples to the north, as one might perhaps expect in the light of the subsequent debate on family forms in Southern Europe. Like Hajnal, who was writing his first great essay on European marriage and family patterns in those very same years, he believes that the really important fault line runs across a West/East axis: “Europe”, he writes, “knows small family organization (...) the Near East, in contrast, knows joint-families and Balkan-style zadrugas and Hausgemeinschaften.”

Arensberg’s article has been rarely cited (if at all) outside anthropological circles. Yet it was an authoritative synthesis of the findings of influential anthropological monographs based on field research, first of all Julian Pitt-Rivers’s celebrated ethnography of Alcalá de la Sierra, an Andalusian town, published in 1954. “The people of Alcalá”, Pitt-Rivers had reported,

feel very strongly that every family should possess its own house, and to marry without a separate home is regarded as a make-shift arrangement (...) the economic advantages which might accrue from forming a larger family unit are offset by the desire to be free of the tensions which make family life impossible where there is more than one family in the house. ‘Cada uno en su casa’ (‘each one in his own house’), that is the only way to live peacefully. ‘Casada casa quiere’ (‘housewife wants house’), the saying rubs the point.

Another extremely influential monographic study had been, in 1958, Edward Banfield’s book The Moral Basis of a Backward Society, based on fieldwork conducted in “Montegrano”, a town located in the southern Italian region of Lucania. The “backward society” referred to in the title was the Italian South, and the famous – or infamous – thesis advanced by Banfield, an anthropologically-ori-

28. Ibid., 88.
ented political scientist, was that the ultimate cause of backwardness was the ethos of “amoral familism” pervading southern Italian society, where the paramount loyalties of each individual were to the nuclear family. While highly critical, indeed (especially Davis) contemptuous of Banfield’s argument, both Sydel Silverman and John Davis did not dispute the primacy he had accorded to the nuclear family. In an article of 1968, which is probably the best anthropological discussion of Italian family forms published before 1980, Silverman conceded that Banfield was basically right in his description of the nuclear family as the dominant social unit in southern Italy. As to Davis, who in the mid-1960s had studied Pisticci, a town in the Lucania region not far from “Montegrano”, he reported – in another very influential book – that “the commonest domestic group in Pisticci is the nuclear family; at each marriage, ideally, a new household is set up.” Interestingly, he also informs us that “most people marry” and that “men marry about ten years later in life than women”, adding that “most Pisticcesi girls hope to be married by the time they are twenty-five, and to a man older than they are but not more than thirty-five.” Davis also notes that “marriages between people under eighteen are very rare”; but he adds that “there is some evidence that, four or five generations ago, girls were married at the age of twelve or thirteen.”

These quotations from a set of selected vintage studies are a reminder that until the early 1980s, although it was acknowledged that “the Mediterranean presents a wide variety of kinds of nuclear and extended family households”, nevertheless, as far as Mediterranean Europe west of the Hajnal line was concerned, and especially as far as the quintessentially Mediterranean Europe represented by Andalusia and southern Italy was concerned, the “null hypothesis” anthropologists had to reject was that the nuclear family constituted the dominant co-residential arrangement. This is nicely demonstrated by the 1980 article by William Douglass, “The South Italian Family: A Critique”, where he pro-

33. Ibid., 55.
34. Ibid., 25.
duced evidence collected during his anthropological fieldwork in Agnone, a town in the Molise region, which, he believed, “contradicted the image of the South Italian family found in the literature.”

A striking, and revealing, feature of Douglass’s article is that he was at pains not only to convince his readers that in Agnone patrilineal joint family households had actually been frequent in the past and were still to be found in the present, but also to demonstrate that the region of Molise must be regarded as properly belonging to the South of Italy. The reason is clear. Much of the value of his findings resided in the fact that they rejected the “null hypothesis” that the South Italian family was nuclear. And he was aware of the danger posed by the insidious objection that Agnone is located close to the boundary between southern and central Italy, possibly even north of it, and that therefore he had just come across a variant of a less quintessential Mediterranean family pattern, whose features were already well-known since they had been recently described by historians like Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber and also by a few anthropologists.

Within the anthropological camp, the pivotal figure in this respect had been Sydel Silverman. She had done her fieldwork in a sharecropping area in the region of Umbria, in the heart of the central Italian belt of “classic mezzadria”, where she had discovered a high frequency of large, complex families: as late as 1960, in Montecastello di Vibo over 40% of all households (and 60% of the sharecroppers’ households) were either extended or multiple. This finding led her to argue in her 1968 article, which was primarily a critique of Banfield’s theses, that it was a gross mistake to assume an essential homogeneity of Italy or at least of “Mediterranean” Italy south of the river Po. In fact, her argument runs, a clear and all-important boundary separates what she calls the “Deep South”, where “the nuclear family is the rule”, and the distinct culture area of “Central Italy”, whose ways of life have been shaped by the mezzadria system.

There is an aspect of the Banfield-Silverman controversy which is rarely mentioned and yet is probably relevant to the debate over Mediterranean family forms. One of Banfield’s main points was that there were reasons to doubt that “non-Western cultures” were able to attain the high level of organization required by a modern economy and by a democratic political order. Interestingly, he felt that outside America and Europe there seemed to be “only one important culture – the Japanese – which is both radically different from our own and capable of maintaining the necessary degree of organization.” The results of his

study of “Montegrano” convinced him that the culture of southern Italy, “although not radically foreign to ours”, was nevertheless different from it. In many crucial respects, southern Italy was closer to the underdeveloped world of “non-Western cultures” than to America and the rest of Western Europe. Banfield’s implication that Mediterranean Italy should or might be lumped together with the “primitives” still comes as a shock to Italian readers, and one is entitled to suspect that Silverman did not like it either. In her book on Montecastello – significantly entitled *Three Bells of Civilization* – she hammered the point that her central Italian sharecroppers were and felt civilized. The southern boundaries of the classic *mezzadria* system were the boundaries of civilization.

For a variety of reasons, however, in the early 1980s it was the “civilized” Mediterranean of central Italian sharecroppers who were to be taken by demographic and family historians as representative of Southern or Mediterranean Europe – and, ironically, to be lumped together in Hajnal’s 1982 paper with the “oriental” and possibly “primitive” populations of India and China! The “null hypothesis” to be tested became that joint family households were the rule and that there was a functional interrelation between the prevalence of this co-residential arrangement, early marriage for women (and possibly for men) and the absence in Southern Europe of high numbers of life-cycle servants.

3. Marriage and family in Mediterranean Europe: stability, change and spatial variability

Tony Wrigley was a good prophet in suggesting that “to establish the boundaries between ‘Western’ and ‘Mediterranean’ marriage patterns, their persistence over time, and the social and economic concomitants of the two systems” was likely to be a problem actively pursued in the 1980s. The first discovery was, as we have already seen, that both in Italy and in Iberia there was evidence indicating that nuclear family households had predominated in the southern regions, whereas more complex forms – accounting for 20% to over 50% of all households – appeared to have been typical of the regions to the north. In a way, such a “discovery” was simply confirming what social anthropologists had been claiming for twenty years. It should be noticed, however, that anthropologists were inclined to see the contemporary prevalence of the nuclear family as the outcome of recent processes of modernization. In his authoritative survey of Mediterranean family structures, John Peristiany observed that the nuclear family was flourishing in Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Israel, whereas the extended families (still numerous in the rest of the Mediterranean) appeared,

42. E. Anthony Wrigley, “Population History in the 1980s”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 12, no. 2 (1981);

increasingly, as “relics from an undifferentiated world”, a recessive rather than
dominant social characteristic. It is to the credit of the painstaking archival
studies conducted by historians and demographers in the 1980s that they have
demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt the antiquity and persistence, both
in Italy and in Iberia, of broad regional patterns of contrasting family structures
already visible in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Students of Iberian nuptiality were also quick to detect the existence of
widely different marriage patterns in the southern and northern regions of both
Spain and Portugal. A number of local studies suggested, for example, that in
the southern Portuguese provinces of Algarve, Alentejo and Ribatejo women had
married at 20-21 years of age, and men at approximately 27, whereas in the
northern provinces of Minho and Trás-os-Montes women had tended to get mar-
rried in their late twenties and men in their late twenties or early thirties. Similar
differences were to be found in Spain, and in both countries late marriage was
accompanied by higher proportions of men and women who never married.
These findings have convinced most Iberian family historians that Portugal and
Spain have hosted for centuries “two fundamentally different family systems”,
neither of which – they have been keen to stress – complied with Hajnal’s rules
of household formation. In the southern regions, where partible inheritance had
been the norm, both men and especially women had married young, and yet
post-marital residence had been overwhelmingly neolocal and nuclear families
had consequently prevailed; in the northern regions, on the other hand, where
one heir was chosen among his or her siblings to inherit most of the family
estate, marriage was late but households tended to be structurally complex
(although, one should notice, they were of the “stem” rather than of the “joint”
variety of complex family household).

In Italy things have turned out to be even more complicated than in Spain
and Portugal, and Barbagli has been able to identify three different household
formation systems operating in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The
first one, apparently characteristic of much of northern and central Italy, com-
bined complex patrilocal households and late marriage age, whereas the second,
combining simple neolocal households with early female marriage age (though
not as early as suggested by Davis for Pisticci), had predominated in the south:
both combinations defied the functional interrelationships postulated by Hajnal.
The third system, on the other hand, abided by Hajnal’s rules, since it combined

45. See Vicente Pérez Moreda, “Matrimonio y familia. Algunas consideraciones sobre el modelo matrimonial
español en la Edad Moderna”, Boletín de la Asociación de Demografía Histórica, 4, no. 1 (1986); 3-51; Rowland,
“Sistemas matrimoniales en la Península Ibérica”; Reher, “Marriage Patterns in Spain, 1887-1930”.
46. Reher, Perspectives on the Family in Spain, 67.
simple neolocal households with late marriage for both sexes – but it was a “Northwestern” European pattern, and paradoxically it was typified by Sardinia, a quintessentially Mediterranean region! All in all, the only system not to be significantly attested in Italy – at least in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – was precisely the “Mediterranean” one combining joint patrilocal households with early female marriage age.47

The identification of two different family systems in Iberia, and no less than three in Italy, had obviously the effect of severely undermining the notion of a uniform Mediterranean joint household formation system, thereby blurring the North/South boundary. Further research has shown that these regional subdivisions were still too broad and concealed a rich mosaic of local household formation systems. Once again, historical-demographic investigations have corroborated the earlier findings of social anthropologists. In 1976 Carmelo Lisón Tolosana had reported that in the environmentally highly diverse Spanish region of Galicia, in spite of a considerable degree of cultural homogeneity, three types of inheritance were customary, and to these three types of inheritance corresponded three types of family and, indeed, three different forms of domestic morality. Lisón’s contention that environmental factors had a primary role in molding different patterns and “ethics” of inheritance and coresidence – his study, he remarked, “could well be titled the ecological background of morality”48 – has been largely borne out by subsequent historical-demographic and anthropological investigations carried out in Southern Europe, most clearly by studies comparing contiguous upland and lowland areas. These studies have shown that – other things (cultural, economic, organizational) being equal – there is a widespread tendency for mountainous areas to be characterized by lower levels of nuptiality and by more complex household structures. This is nowhere more evident than in the marked contrast between the Pyrenean, Alpine and Apennine valleys and the adjacent plains.49 The subtle interplay of ecology, economy and culture has been, however, demonstrated especially by research conducted in the Alps, where different ways of dealing with similar environmental constraints resulted in a checkered map of co-residential forms in which complex family household systems predominated in some areas and nuclear systems in others.50

47. Barbagli, “Three Household Formation Systems”.
These examples, which could easily be multiplied, show that the last fifteen years of research on the Southern European family have been marked by a growing tendency to move away from the original distinction between a Northwestern and a Mediterranean system, to emphasize the plurality and diversity of Southern European patterns and to minimize their difference and separation from the Northwestern system. By reproposing a stark North/South opposition between two basically homogeneous marriage and family systems, Reher’s 1998 article goes in the opposite direction and would seem to bring us back to square one. But there is an important twist in the tale, for Reher maintains that the joint family prevailed only in very few Southern European areas, that the prototypical case of medieval Tuscany “is exceptional in Europe”, and that southern Europe was actually characterized by simple neolocal households and by relatively early and high levels of nuptiality. This is very close to the pattern originally portrayed by the first anthropologists to work on the northern shore of the western Mediterranean, and it seems no accident that Reher, like Pitt-Rivers, believes that the entire process of household formation is “aptly characterized in the traditional Spanish aphorism casada casa quiere – ‘the bride (or groom) demands a home.’”

Although Reher’s argument contains several valuable points, as I shall try to show presently, such a generalization is hard to accept for it amounts to a debatable expunction of the ample evidence, accumulated in the last two decades, which indicates that local systems of joint household formation, sometimes exhibiting late marriage age for both men and women, were by no means exceptional. This was especially the case of central and northern Italy and other sharecropping areas in Southern Europe. As is well known, in these areas agrarian contracts included among their terms that the labor capacity of the sharecropper and his family should match the labor requirements of the holding. Such requirements being generally high, there was virtually no limit to the number of sons who could bring wives into the parental household. Although sharecroppers tended to rely mostly on family labor, they could also keep live-in servants and would hire laborers for wages at peak times. This resulted in a pattern in which a higher stratum made up of the large joint families of the sharecroppers coexisted in the same localities with a lower stratum consisting of the smaller and structurally simpler households of the day laborers.

51. Reher, “Family Ties in Western Europe”, 223.
52. Ibid., 205.
It is worth noting that, although the basic features of sharecropping as a legal agrarian contract remained largely the same for a thousand years, its diffusion changed enormously over time. In Italy, which has been the *locus* par excellence of sharecropping in Southern Europe, the *mezzadria* system made its first known appearance in the ninth century, but greatly expanded during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when medium-sized integrated farms (*poderi*) were created all over northern and central Italy and granted to sharecroppers. In 1947 one-third of the total farm area was still sharecropped land, but in the early modern age, before sharecropping started to decline in northern Italy eventually to disappear, such proportion was obviously much higher, and so was the proportion of joint family households. One can therefore be sure that the saying “*casada casa quiere*” does not adequately capture the central and northern Italian experience, or indeed the experience of the many upland areas in Portugal, Spain, southern France and Italy where stem-family arrangements prevailed and the married heir was expected to stay at home with his or her parents – “*casado en casa*”, to quote the alternative saying from mountainous Galicia. Moreover, Reher’s generalization, with its insistence on long-term continuity and “uncertain but distant origins”, may help reinforce a potentially confusing tendency that has characterized the whole debate on European family forms – namely the tendency to look for long-term differences between the various regions or cultural areas of Europe and to lose sight of the possibility that in the same area the levels of nuptiality and household complexity may have changed over time.

Yet it can hardly be disputed that both in Iberia and in Italy these levels changed significantly between the late Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. Take the emblematic case of Tuscan nuptiality recently investigated by Marco Breschi and Rosella Rettaroli, who have collected and processed all the available evidence on the evolution of age at marriage for both men and women from the mid-fourteenth century to 1900 (see figure 1). We know from many studies that the family system was roughly as joint in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as it was in the late medieval period, and yet particularly the mean age at marriage for women increased very markedly. In terms of synchronic functional relationships and compatibilities, these data confirm that early marriage, though obviously very important to maximize the number of co-resident couples, may not be as essential to the definition of a joint family system as the other criteria set by Hajnal – a point which had already been made both for the sharecropping

54. See T. J. Byres, “Historical Perspectives on Sharecropping”, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 10, nos. 2-3 (1983); 18-23; and also Viazzo and Albera, “The Peasant Family in Northern Italy”, 471-75.
55. Reher, “Family Ties in Western Europe”, 212.
populations of the central Italian region of Emilia-Romagna and for the somewhat different but undoubtedly joint systems found in many parts of the Italian and French Alps. In more dynamic terms, the Tuscan evidence contradicts Hajnal’s prediction that “joint household populations and Northwest European populations must have reacted in fundamentally different ways to adverse economic difficulties and particularly to difficulties resulting from population growth.”

Tuscan sharecroppers, in spite of retaining a joint family system, were able progressively to delay – and restrict – marriage.

Or perhaps we should say: precisely because they wanted to remain sharecroppers and retain joint families. In fact, figure 1 hides significant differentials in the evolution of Tuscan nuptiality. In order not to be expelled from their farms, sharecroppers had to adapt to mounting pressures to control their numbers, and in particular the producer/consumer ratio. The day-laborers, who made up a subpopulation living in smaller and less complex households, were

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58. Viazzo, Upland Communities, 241.
on the other hand relatively free of such pressures. The paradoxical outcome was that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the sharecroppers married later than the day-laborers, and permanent celibacy rates could be much higher.\(^{60}\) This process has probably reached its climax in the second half of the twentieth century. Anthropological researchers working in the 1980s in one of the Tuscan areas in which sharecropping had been strongest and most persistent came across *mezzadri* who had recently celebrated their first marriage at the age of 55 or 60 and were adamant that protracted celibacy was “a social practice which was essential to the functioning and the survival of the family group on the *podere*”.\(^{61}\) Although it would be too hasty to conclude that such a reversal can be observed all over central Italy,\(^{62}\) a similar outcome has been reported for nineteenth-century Emilia-Romagna\(^{63}\) and suggests intriguing parallels with comparable changes in nuptiality patterns in India.\(^{64}\)

### 4. Servants, honor, and the transition to adulthood

Although the “battle of the Mediterranean” has raged mainly over the first and the second of Hajnal’s rules, the validity of the third rule, the one stating that life-cycle service was a distinguishing feature of the Northwestern European system vis-à-vis joint family systems, has also been tested. Opinions differ quite considerably, however.

Angiolina Arru, who has probably done more than anyone else in Italy to promote the historical study of service, has repeatedly insisted on the specificities of domestic service in Italy and, at the same time, argued that the Italian evidence shows the “insufficiency” or “inadequacy” of the influential models proposed by Laslett and Hajnal.\(^{65}\) In a recent paper such a dissatisfaction has been

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62. See Rettaroli, “‘Maritu a chi troa, moglie a chi tocca’”, 523.


64. See Das Gupta, “Kinship Systems and Demographic Regimes”, 39-40.

expressed in its most explicit, and testable, terms. Her first point is that there was no serious quantitative difference between service in Northwestern Europe and in Italy, because in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Italy servants accounted for “about one-tenth of the total population;” she also contends that in general Italian servants were not older than their Northern counterparts and that the real specificity of Italian service consisted in higher proportions of male servants than in most other European countries.66

Such an authoritative statement would seem to corroborate Kertzer and Brettell’s claim that in Italy, and more generally in Southern Europe, a tremendous number of children left home to enter some form of service. Arru’s characterization of Italian service is, however, severely at odds with the picture presented by Reher, who asserts that there was a sharp quantitative contrast between Northern and Southern Europe, servants being “generally between two and four times more numerous in Northern European societies than they were in Mediterranean regions.”67 (We may note that this is a very important issue for Reher, whose argument is that a crucial distinguishing feature of the Northern European system vis-à-vis Southern Europe is not so much neolocality as a different way of leaving home: as servants in the north, as brides and grooms in the south – delayed vs. immediate neolocality, so to speak.)

So, who is right? The first point to be noticed is that until 1861, the date of the first national census, there is no way of knowing the exact proportion of servants in the total population of Italy – and in 1861 such a proportion was quite low (2.2% of the entire population). 1861 is admittedly a rather late date, but even if we move backwards there seems to be little evidence to support Arru’s statement. Reher has a useful table summarizing much of the available data for Southern Europe: for Italy (and, indeed, for the whole Southern European region) the only figure approaching the 10% threshold is a 9.5% recorded in four parishes of the Pisan countryside around 1700.68 What is more, Giovanna Da Molin’s survey of a large number of listings of inhabitants from over 40 southern Italian communities, along with more fragmentary evidence from other localities, leaves little doubt that throughout the modern age the proportion of servants in southern Italy (whose population accounted for about one-third of the total population of Italy) was exceedingly low, in the region of 1 or 2% at most.69

67. Reher, “Family Ties in Western Europe”, 206.
68. Ibid., 229.
69. Giovanna Da Molin, “Family Forms and Domestic Service in Southern Italy from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries”, Journal of Family History, 15, no. 4 (1990); 501-27; see also her La famiglia nel passato. Strutture familiari nel Regno di Napoli in età moderna (Bari: Cacucci, 1990), 123-59.
Admirable and stimulating as her work on servants is in other respects, Arru’s claim about the demographic weight of servants in modern age Italy does not appear to be justified. It is probably an unwarranted generalization from the case of some Italian cities, Rome in particular, where the proportion of servants in the population could indeed easily exceed the 10% mark. Also unwarranted is, I think, her use of urban domestic servants (cooks, lackeys, coachmen and the rest) to test and reject Hajnal’s model, when Hajnal had emphasized – correctly, in my view – that he regarded “purely domestic servants (often especially numerous in the cities)” to be “clearly different from Northwest European rural servants.”

In this connection it is worth noting that in Italy as well as in Spain there seems to be a growing interest in the study of urban domestic service, whereas interest in rural service is apparent-

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Table 1. Six communities of Puglia, 1600-1810: proportion of servants by sex and age group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. One of the regions of southern Italy. Total population of the six communities: 30,968.


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ly petering out. This means that the “relative dearth of studies of service in Italy” denounced a few years ago by Richard Smith\(^2\) still persists and the general picture remains unclear. Generalizations and inferences from urban studies of “purely domestic” servants may actually muddle the issues and lead us to lose sight of the few points solidly established by the research conducted in the 1980s.

One of these points is that, although throughout Italy servants were far less numerous than in Northwestern Europe, nevertheless their proportion in the total population tended to be notably lower in the southern regions than in northern and central sectors of the Italian peninsula: the proportions summarily presented by Reher range between 4% and 9.5% for central and northern

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Table 2. Countryside around Lucca\(^1\), 1411-13: servants (famuli, famulae) by sex and age group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Servants</td>
<td>% servants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25+</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ages 10+</td>
<td>1443</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Total population: 4,170. SMAM: 24.6 (males); 14.9 (females).

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localities as compared to just 0.7–1.5% in the south.\textsuperscript{73} Besides confirming that in southern Italy servants were actually very few, table 1 shows that their age distribution had little to do with the pattern typical of Northwestern Europe. Also, service appears to have been of the \textit{lifetime} rather than of the \textit{life-cycle} variety, and was often entered in adulthood or indeed in old age: the prevalence of women is partly explained by the presence of a not negligible number of widows. A no less important difference from Northwestern Europe was that in the south of Italy, Da Molin tells us, “to go into service was considered to be humiliating and a disgrace;” female servants, in particular, “were almost always low-class, emarginated women with no family.”\textsuperscript{74}

Da Molin suggests that the southern Italian “mentality” obsessed with honor “may help to explain the profound differences in domestic service between southern Italy and the rest of Italy, and between southern Italy and northern Europe in general.”\textsuperscript{75} Sharing Kertzer and Brettell’s view that life-cycle service was widespread in much of Southern Europe, and accepting the existence of a cultural boundary between what Silverman had called the “Deep South” and the rest of Italy and Europe, she writes that in the central

---

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lcc}
\hline
Age groups & \% servants in the total population & \% servants in the male population \\
\hline
5-9 & 2 & 4 \\
10-14 & 10 & 18 \\
15-19 & 27 & 41 \\
20-24 & 16 & 26 \\
25-29 & 7 & 13 \\
30-34 & 8 & 17 \\
36-39 & 2 & 4 \\
40-44 & 1 & 3 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Three parishes\textsuperscript{1} in the countryside around Pisa, 1720: proportion of servants by age group}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{1} Total population: 925. Total number of servants: 74 (8.0\%). \textsc{smam}: 30.5 (males), 25.5 (females).


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\textsuperscript{73} Reher, “Family Ties in Western Europe”, 229.

\textsuperscript{74} Da Molin, “Family Forms and Domestic Service in Southern Italy”, 521-22.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 522.
and northern regions of Italy “to enter service was considered a temporary activity for both men and women and limited to a certain period of their lives, between the ages of 15 and 25.” In southern Italy, on the other hand, where “a woman’s honor, her virginity, was fundamental for marriage”, women were strictly vigilated and were not allowed to work in the fields: they “stayed at home to wait for the fateful day and married young, often very young”.76 Personally, I think that Da Molin is probably right in emphasizing the importance of honor – a notion that the more recent generations of Mediterranean anthropologists have too hastily and squeamishly relegated to the attic – and of the related pattern of exclusion of women from work in the fields.77 We may wonder, however, whether the neat contraposition between southern and northern Italy she proposes is really tenable. A number of valuable studies rarely mentioned in the international literature cast more than a shadow of doubt on its validity.

Some data from one of these studies,78 based on a late medieval listing of the inhabitants of the rural belt surrounding the Tuscan town of Lucca, are reported in table 2. Although they refer to a district not covered by the catasto analyzed by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, and less heavily characterized by sharecropping, these figures confirm that in fifteenth-century Tuscany rural servants tended to be very few, very young and much more frequently male

Table 4. 208 parishes in the diocese of Reggio Emilia, 1708

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological zone</th>
<th>N parishes</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% servants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Apennine valleys</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>13,564</td>
<td>1,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Apennine valleys</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9,526</td>
<td>3,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilly zone</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12,183</td>
<td>4,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16,992</td>
<td>6,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside around Reggio Emilia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14,590</td>
<td>6,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Reggio</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11,780</td>
<td>8,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reclaimed land</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23,114</td>
<td>5,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocese of Reggio Emilia</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>101,759</td>
<td>5,2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


76. Ibid.


than female, thereby violating virtually all the criteria posited by Hajnal and Laslett as distinctive of the Northwestern European pattern of life-cycle service.

Another revealing study is an article by Andrea Doveri on a cluster of parishes in the countryside around Pisa, an area of special significance since it is the one used by Hajnal to exemplify his Southern European variety of joint household formation system. As one can see from the note to Table 3, in the course of three centuries marriage age had greatly increased for both men and especially women since the years (1427-30) considered by Hajnal, and the number of servants also looks fairly high: 8% of the total population of these three tiny Tuscan parishes in 1720. Nevertheless, although Doveri unfortunately fails to provide the absolute numbers of male and female servants, it is evident that rural service remained essentially a male affair. This makes one wonder whether, as far as female service was concerned, southern Italy was really as different from Tuscany as implied by Da Molin. Indeed, Da Molin’s statement that for a southern Italian woman “to work as a servant was considered the last resort” is strikingly reminiscent of Christiane Klapisch-Zuber’s characterization of female service in fifteenth-century Tuscany, where the importance of honor is strongly emphasized — and it would seem that in early eighteenth-century Tuscany things had not changed greatly.


80. Da Molin, “Family Forms and Domestic Service in Southern Italy”, 522.


Table 5. Some features of three ecological zones in the diocese of Reggio Emilia, 1708

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household type (Laslett/Hammel)</th>
<th>% celibates 50+</th>
<th>Servants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecological zone</td>
<td>% M/F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High valleys</td>
<td>4.7 10.6 48.2 27.6 9.0 4.8 27.1 26.4 1.1 0.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside</td>
<td>4.1 4.3 48.4 12.4 30.8 6.3 8.9 7.2 6.5 2.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>12.4 10.3 62.4 10.8 4.2 4.3 n.a. n.a 8.2 0.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean Household Size

nal, that “in a society where women married very young, it was not possible for them to work for a period as servants to the same degree as in the Northwestern European sense.” This can hardly be disputed, but clearly there are two different meanings of “not possible” – a mathematical and a cultural meaning, as it were. In eighteenth-century Tuscany women did not marry very young, and yet they did not enter service. Men did, and in considerable numbers, but for them too service was not linked to marriage in the same way as for their northern counterparts. Precious longitudinal evidence analyzed by Doveri indicates that boys would enter service at 11-12 years of age, stayed in service for about 7-8 years and returned home at 19. They remained in their families for another ten years on average before getting married, and during these years they worked as day-laborers for the sharecropping families. For it should be stressed that only the sons of day-laborers became servants. This asymmetry between sharecroppers and day-laborers in the same population, and the no less marked differences between men and women, suggest that

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Table 6. Proportion of servants in the Reggio Emilia area (rural belt, urban center) by sex and age, 1708

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Rural belt</th>
<th>Urban center¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-15</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35+</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ urban servants are excluded for reasons specified by Moretti; this explains the difference in the sex ratio (0.52 vs. 0.59 in Table 5).


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82. Hajnal, “Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System”, 473.
83. Da Molin, “Family Forms and Domestic Service in Southern Italy”, 513.
84. Doveri, “Padre che ha figliuoli grandi fuor li mandi,” 436-44.
we should be wary of accepting one of the arguments advanced by some critics of the Hajnal/Laslett model, namely that the association between life-cycle service and neolocality is undermined by the fact that “such service was common in the joint family households of sharecroppers in central Italy.”

A different perspective on the “central Italian family” and on the role of servants is offered by Pietro Moretti’s impressive study of the diocese of Reggio Emilia in 1708, where he skillfully combines the macroanalysis of a large population – over 100,000 souls, as one can see from table 4 – with a detailed study of the life courses of a sizeable number of sharecropping families. As is typical of Italy, this area is geographically heterogeneous, and table 4 shows that the proportion of servants in the population declined very markedly with altitude. In the upland communities of the high Apennine valleys, where peasant smallholders lived in complex but not large households, and permanent celibacy was exceedingly high for both men and women, servants were very rare and predominantly female (table 5). Servants were more numerous in the rural belt surrounding the city of Reggio and in the urban center itself. But the sex ratio and the age distribution of the rural servants, employed by families of sharecroppers, were sharply different from the sex ratio and age distribution of the urban domestic servants (table 6).

86. Moretti, “Un uomo per famiglio”.

Table 7. Seven communities of northern, central and southern Italy: sex ratios in the local subpopulations of sharecroppers and day-laborers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sex ratio (M/F)</th>
<th>Sharecroppers</th>
<th>Day-laborers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. Pietro in Cerro</td>
<td>Emilia</td>
<td>1557</td>
<td>126.2</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>140.3</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samarate</td>
<td>Lombardy</td>
<td>1574</td>
<td>131.7</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prato</td>
<td>Tuscany</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td>130.81</td>
<td>83.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Agata de’ Goti</td>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>135.1</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terranova Fossaceca</td>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>1753</td>
<td>135.8</td>
<td>119.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casale de Terranova</td>
<td>Calabria</td>
<td>1658</td>
<td>121.2</td>
<td>108.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostuni</td>
<td>Puglia</td>
<td>1613</td>
<td>146.6</td>
<td>118.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Sex ratios for Prato refer to males and females aged 15+. 

A still different, even broader perspective comes from two articles by Gérard Delille, which can be seen, in Delille’s own words, as a “tour d’Italie” starting from a sixteenth-century northern village in the Po Valley, San Pietro in Cerro, close to the boundary between Emilia and Lombardy. Delille’s data confirm, first of all, that before the “great transformation” of the agricultural economy of the Po Valley, which led to the decline and final demise of sharecropping, the north of Italy had been characterized by family forms very similar to those found in central Italy until very recently, i.e. large joint families of sharecroppers coexisting in variable proportions with the smaller households of the day-laborers. In addition, and it is a crucial finding, Delille discovers that in the families of the day-laborers of San Pietro in Cerro the sex ratios were severely unbalanced because 20% of the males aged 7 to 18, 70% of those aged 19 to 30, and again 25% of the men in their thirties were absent – the standard formula being “fuori per famiglio”, “out to work as a servant.” Interestingly, such a formula is diametrically opposed, and complementary, to the one selected by Moretti to serve as title for his article: “un uomo per famiglio”, a common clause in sharecropping contracts whereby landowners obligated their tenants to hire “a man to work as a servant” whenever necessary. In fact, Delille’s main argument is that rural patterns of mobility, and the individual life courses of the day-laborers’ sons, were shaped by this flow of servants who left their homes to be hired by the sharecropping families.

A quick indicator of the link between sharecropping and this pattern of unequal exchange between households is represented, for Delille, by symmetrically unbalanced sex ratios in the two subpopulations (table 7). There are of course some problems. The sex ratios are patently more unbalanced in some localities than in others. Moreover, Delille’s argument is that service was purely a male affair, which fits in with the Tuscan evidence we have seen but is partly contradicted by the data produced by Moretti. Also, Delille suggests that the end of service coincided with marriage, which does not tally with Doveri’s reconstruction of the life courses of the Pisan day-laborers’ sons. And, finally, one may wonder whether male service was everywhere the only factor responsible for unbalanced sex ratios: again for eighteenth-century Tuscany there is, as we shall see, evidence that selective abandonment of girls was also playing a role. What is interesting to note is, however, Delille’s contention that all over Italy, wherever the same economic conditions obtained, similar behavioral outcomes would emerge. Far from being rooted in underlying cultural factors, as Banfield and

others had claimed, differing family forms and behaviors are taken to be simply a “compositional” effect of the variable strength of sharecropping in the northern, central and southern regions of Italy.

5. The family as a welfare institution

It is part of Reher’s thesis that a novel perspective on the varieties of family life in Europe, past and present, can be gained if renewed interest in the phase of transition to marriage and adulthood is accompanied by greater attention paid to the later process of transition to retirement and old age.88 This is a conviction now shared by many scholars and already voiced by Andrejs Plakans a decade ago, when he suggested that if the starting point in our investigation of European family forms were the position and treatment of the elderly and “types of stepping down rather than general household-demographic attributes a somewhat different typology of regions could emerge.”89

It should be noticed, however, that some of the most influential hypotheses put forward over the past ten years or so on the relationships between the condition of the elderly and family forms seem to be largely compatible with Hajnal’s typological effort and its resulting geography. Plakans himself spoke of “two Europes, with the Elbe river serving as the dividing line”: on the Western side, where household headships were controlled by the peasants, and nuclear or “filiocentric” stem families prevailed, the stepping down of heads tended to come as an abrupt turning point and the elderly had to fear a sudden disappearance of material support; on the Eastern side, where joint families prevailed and headship was often a quasi-public office under the control of landowners, retirement was instead a gradual process and the elderly were offered a higher degree of security.90 In a partly similar vein, the “nuclear hardship” hypothesis advanced by Peter Laslett posits that joint and other complex family forms were better equipped to shield vulnerable categories such as orphans, widowed people and the elderly from hardship than was the nuclear family. His prediction is that the more dominant simple family households were in a society, and the more strictly neolocal residence rules applied, the more important was to be the support of the collectivity as it was greater the likelihood that elderly people were forced to live in weak households or, indeed, as solitaries.91

One way of testing these hypotheses is to study the living arrangements of the aged. Research on southern Europe has shown that in the areas character-

90. Ibid., 183.
ized by joint family systems the great majority of elderly people lived in large complex households and that cases of old men or women living alone were extremely rare. In the sharecropping parish of Bertalia, in central Italy, Kertzer found that in 1880 over 70% of those aged over 65 years resided in extended or multiple households, no one had been left alone, and virtually no widows or widowers lived in households without at least one of their children. Similar patterns and proportions have been discovered in the geographical belt extending from northern Spain and the Pyrenees through southern France to the western Alps, where stem-family arrangements were widespread. It is important to note that the stem-family arrangements typical of this Southern European belt were substantially different from the ones classically attested in Ireland and in much of central Europe. To use the anthropological jargon, southern European stem-family systems were of the “patricentric” kind: the crucial rule, epitomized by the very title of Alain Collomp’s classic study of this system, La maison du père, was that the father and household head did not retire when his heir got married but tended to retain his authority until his death, or to transfer it slowly and gradually to his successor; in this case, even when the heir had actually taken over the reins, he continued to co-reside with the younger generations and was commonly given a sort of “honorary” headship.

It may also be relevant to remember that Hajnal had clearly distinguished these “patricentric” forms of stem-family organization from the “filiocentric” system in which the heir becomes head of his own household at marriage. He had added that, while the latter was compatible with the Northwestern European household formation rules, the former appeared to fall into neither of the two major kinds of systems he had outlined. The evidence from southern Europe suggests that in terms of living arrangements of the elderly, fairly similar pat-

97. Hajnal, “Two Kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation System”, 70.
terns could result from “patricentric” stem family systems as well as from joint family systems. More generally, this evidence would seem to suggest that differential degrees of family support to the elderly were concomitant characteristics of contrasting systems of household formation, thereby confirming the validity of Hajnal’s dual typology.

There is, however, other evidence from Southern Europe which qualifies such a conclusion. The notion of the developmental cycle of domestic group has long helped clarify that even in stem, or indeed joint family systems, people may spend long segments of their life courses in nuclear family households. What has been less commonly recognized is that in simple household formation systems many people could spend significant portions of their lives in complex households. Da Molin’s analysis of listings from a large number of towns and villages in early modern South Italy has revealed that, although neolocality was the rule and nuclear households were consequently the dominant type, a considerable proportion of elderly people lived in complex households with their married children or with other relatives. This is explained, according to Da Molin, by the fact that a cultural norm of solidarity imposed that the needy and the vulnerable should not be abandoned by their kin, and in particular that married children should take in their frail or widowed parents.98

This evidence from southern Italy is a useful reminder that the prevailing concern with household formation rules fostered by Hajnal’s essays has made family historians blind to the significance of what Kertzer has named reincorporation rules.99 Such evidence, along with the finding that even in England the proportion of elderly men and women residing with their children was greater than initially assumed, has actually led Kertzer to argue that if we look at the end of the life course, then the difference between Northern and Southern European families (and, by implication, the contrast between Western and non-Western family systems) is less than many have supposed. David Reher, on the other hand, while agreeing with Kertzer that different ways of confronting old age had little to do with the classic types of familial organization, believes that family ties were, and still are, unquestionably much stronger in Southern than in Northern Europe. Reher has no doubt that in Mediterranean Europe the family was far more essential for the well-being of its more vulnerable members than in northern latitudes and, in particular, that the care of the elderly fell almost exclusively on the family, “whether it was carried out by means of co-residence, the circulation of the elderly among the households of their offspring, or the spatial proximity between the homes of the elderly and those of their children.”100

98. Da Molin, La famiglia nel passato, 98-103.
Several important issues still require to be explored. For instance, although there is no lack of evidence from various places in Southern Europe that household boundaries were permeable and old relatives would often flow in and out as the need arose,\textsuperscript{101} the careful analysis of family and individual life cycles in a French nineteenth-century community characterized by complex family households reveals that the very force of the links between close lineal kin, which favored the co-residence of parents and married children, tended at the same time to hinder the incorporation of more distant relatives (uncles, aunts, cousins) who would swell the ranks of solitaries.\textsuperscript{102} All in all, however, one feels that Reher is largely correct when he argues that in confronting old age Northern and Southern Europeans followed, to borrow Lisón Tolosana’s term, two divergent “ethics” and exhibited a markedly different propensity to invest the collectivity with the ultimate responsibility of taking care of the elderly – as shown still today by the much higher proportion of old people living in institutions in Northern Europe than in Italy, Spain and Portugal.\textsuperscript{103}

Although the empirical investigation and theoretical discussion of these and other issues has not yet gone beyond a rather superficial and rudimentary level, the evidence we have briefly surveyed suggests that, as far as the condition of the elderly was concerned, the set of risks associated with the notion of “nuclear hardship” were less apparent in Southern Europe, and particularly in those areas in which joint or stem family household systems prevailed. The emphasis placed on the greater ability of these systems in securing family support to the old might, however, obscure the existence of other risks and liabilities. A warning comes from the disturbing results of recent research on the health and mortality penalties incurred by young married women (and by older women without sons) living in South Asian joint family households. Comparable data is unfortunately not available for Southern Europe, but ethnographic evidence certainly indicates that for in-marrying wives life was not easy in Mediterranean complex households. An anthropological study of Tuscan sharecropping families has shown that marriage entailed the bride’s almost complete detachment from her family, as indicated by a wealth of ceremonial markers which ranged from her being forbidden to visit her parents and siblings for several weeks after the wedding to greeting formulas that reflected the strong hierarchical relationship between the bride and her mother-in-law.\textsuperscript{104} Even more strikingly, Lisón

\textsuperscript{100} Reher, “Family Ties in Western Europe”, 209.


\textsuperscript{102} Bourdelais, “Vieillir en famille dans la France des ménages complexes”, 37.

\textsuperscript{103} Reher, “Family Ties in Western Europe”, 210.

\textsuperscript{104} Bianco, “The Mezzadria Family”, 140-45.
Tolosana reports that in the stem family households of mountainous Galicia the personal situation of the daughter-in-law could be summed up in two words: submission and toil. An old man, he recalls, used to pray the Rosary each night surrounded by his offspring. Towards the end he would recite Our Fathers for the neighbours, friends and all the dead of the parish and used to conclude: ‘For the welfare of everyone in this house except for the daughter-in-law who is an outsider.’

But life in a Mediterranean joint family could be hard and perilous not only for in-marrying brides but also for the youngest members of the household, right from the moment of their birth. Let us consider, once again, the sharecropping families of central Italy. The married women who lived in these families tended to be highly fertile and it is generally agreed that high-fertility family strategies made good sense since in the long run they assured not only the reproduction of the family labor force, but also the possibility of taking over larger farms. The case of central Italy would therefore seem to conform to Kingsley Davis’s notion of the joint family as one of the “institutional patterns” favoring high fertility. However, central Italian sharecroppers were far from being a peasant population operating in a flexible Chayanovian environment, in which the amount of cultivated land could be expanded and contracted in synchrony with variations in the size of the labor force. In reality, the long-term reproductive strategies of the sharecropping families were potentially in conflict with the shorter-term interests of the landowners, who paid “close attention to the size of their sharecropping households (...) and became alarmed if the number of unproductive consumers – children – became too great.”

When the landowner was visiting the farm, we are told, the sharecroppers were sometimes forced to hide the children in cupboards, in order not to be evicted. In such conditions of strong dependency and high vulnerability for the whole family, hiding a child may have been just one step removed from being forced to resort to sterner measures, including infanticide or abandonment. As I have argued elsewhere, it seems no accident that Tuscany, the classic area of sharecropping, was also one of the Italian regions where abandonment of children was com-

106. Kertzer and Hogan, Family, Political Economy, and Demographic Change, 148-73.
monest: although the practice of abandonment was spread across the social and occupational board, children born in sharecropping joint families were certainly not immune of the risk of been left to the care of foundling hospitals.

There are several relationships between sharecropping and abandonment which raise intriguing questions in the light of the Hajnal hypothesis. Besides indicating that abandonment was used to obtain the desired family size and sex composition, the marked proclivity for abandoning girls rather than boys documented by the records preserved in the archives of the foundling homes warns us against hastily interpreting the unbalanced sex ratios discovered in sharecropping families all over Italy (see table 7) as solely due to the recruitment of male servants. What is more, several studies of central Italian sharecropping areas have revealed that from the late Middle Ages up to the nineteenth century foundlings could account for a high proportion of rural servants.¹¹⁰ No less interestingly, female foundlings were married preferentially into sharecropping families and their age at marriage was, at least in the nineteenth century, massively lower than the mean age at marriage for the rest of the female population.¹¹¹ More generally, a consideration of child abandonment – a practice which was far more ancient and widespread in Southern Europe than in the North – is especially useful to remind us that the nuclear-hardship hypothesis, though in principle intended to apply to individuals at any stage of the life course, has directed attention mainly to the plight of one category of vulnerable people, the elderly. Our perception of the ability of different family forms to function as welfare institutions may change if we turn to the early phases of the life course, all the more so if we adopt a Southern European viewpoint. The fact that the sons and daughters of sharecroppers were not immune from the risk of being abandoned, thus facing exceedingly high chances of dying at an early age, emblematically suggests that there might exist distinctive forms of “joint family hardship” resulting from the social and demographic dynamics specific to this type of social organization.

6. Conclusions

Students of family and marriage in Southern Europe have been among the most zealous in assessing the Hajnal hypothesis. As we have seen, the dominant tendency has been to refute it rule by rule. Two decades of industrious research have demonstrated that the map of Southern European household formation systems

¹¹⁰. See Aurora Angeli, “Strutture sociali e nuzialità nel bolognese a metà dell’Ottocento”, In: E. Sonnino (ed.), Popolazione, società e ambiente. Temi di demografia storica italiana (secc. xvii-xix), (Bologna: clueb, 1990), 91; and Leverotti, Popolazione, famiglie, insediamento, 139.

¹¹¹. See David I. Kertzer and Wendy Sigle, “The Marriage of Female Foundlings in Nineteenth-century Italy”, Continuity and Change, 13, no. 2 (1998); 208-16.
was far more varied and checkered than had been previously assumed and that
the functional relationships linking marriage age, post-marital residence rules
and life-cycle service, if they existed at all, were much less rigid than Hajnal had
postulated. Paradoxically, all this would mean that Hajnal himself had been right
in suspecting that the way in which he had presented the distinctiveness of the
Northwestern European system of household formation might “have to be mod-
ified when Southern European systems have been thoroughly studied.”

Our survey of the literature has shown, however, that in some cases the
rebuttal of Hajnal’s rules has been too hasty and that many misunderstandings
in the debate about marriage and family in Mediterranean Europe have
stemmed from a confusion of medieval and possibly early modern patterns with
patterns detectable later in time. We have also seen that, although servants were
fairly numerous in some parts of Southern Europe, their sex and age distribu-
tion bore little resemblance to the pattern typical of Northwestern Europe.
Instead of revealing significant similarities between Northwestern and Southern
European systems, as Hajnal had envisaged, a study of Italian servants in a life
course perspective points to unexpected differences and gives support to Reher’s
contention that a fresh look at the moment – or moments – of transition when
young people left home may help us to distinguish between the “delayed” form
of neolocal marriage associated in Northwestern Europe with life-cycle service
and various forms of “immediate” neolocality attested in Mediterranean Europe.
The Southern European evidence also confirms the fruitfulness of using
the condition and treatment of the elderly as a crucial diagnostic element to iden-
tify different patterns of family organization. It also suggests, however, that
greater attention should be paid to the early phase in the individual life course.
While some predictions of Laslett’s “nuclear hardship” hypothesis have been
borne out by research conducted in southern Europe, there are reasons to believe
that the stem and joint family forms encountered in the Mediterranean coun-
tries also entailed specific risks and liabilities for their members. It would also
seem that in Southern Europe the role of the family as a welfare institution was
really more essential than in the North, although it remains to be clarified
whether the greater pervasiveness of family and kinship in this and other
domains is to be explained with reference to deep cultural roots, to economic fac-
tors or, as has been recently suggested, to the “relatively tardiness of the develop-
ment of a ‘modern’ State”.

Jiménez and L. Ferrer i Alós (ed.), Familia, casa y trabajo (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1997), 45.
The third pattern of marriage and remarriage: Japan in Eurasian comparative perspectives

Osamu Saito
Introduction

John Hajnal’s approach to demographic regimes in the past highlights the role of marriage and family formation in cross-cultural comparison. Initially his concern was to separate Europe from non-European areas. “Europe” in his 1965 article was referred to as an entire area west of the line from Leningrad (now St Petersburg) to Trieste. But we now know that the Mediterranean countries exhibited traits somewhat different from the “European” pattern, the latter of which is re-defined by Hajnal as “north-west European”. Analytically the North-West European pattern is characterized by neolocal family formation rules and is contrasted with the areas of joint family system such as Russia and China.¹

Be it the 1965 or the 1983 version, the Hajnal hypothesis was dichotomous. It is evident, however, that Hajnal’s dichotomy was not exhaustive. There is a third kind of marriage and family system. The case in point is one found in traditional Japan, which is neither a variant of the joint family system, nor a transient form in the process of “nuclearnisation” of the family. The Japanese stem family (called ie) is different also from family forms observed in North-central European areas, which have often been identified as “stem families” by historians and sociologists. The first section of this chapter concerns traditional Japan’s family formation system and its associated nuptiality pattern, where fact-findings and arguments put forward in recent studies will be summarized.

Another point to be realized is that the empirical examination has so far been concentrated on age at first marriage and celibacy. There has been no discussion about remarriage in relation to the marriage patterns. I shall therefore bring explicitly this remarriage factor into consideration and show that remarriage patterns were almost identical to the ones identified by Hajnal for age and marriage and celibacy. This is the objective of Section 2 of the chapter.

In Section 3, I shall turn to an Asia-specific question. While it is very unlikely that there existed the Asian marriage pattern or the Asian family system, there remains a question of whether or not we may talk about an East Asian pattern. In relation to marriage and remarriage, therefore, I would like to set the Japanese case in the East Asian context to see if Japan was part of the East Asian system.

The whole tripartite argument concerning marriage and remarriage is summarized in the final section, where its implications for the issues of servanthood, gender and work will also be briefly discussed.

1. Family and nuptiality patterns

The family

The structure of the family as a residential unit may best be analysed by looking at who lived with the conjugal family under the same roof. While few kin are found in a simple, nuclear family household, it is expected that a joint family household contained a sizeable number of co-resident brothers and sisters of the head. In stem family areas, on the other hand, relatively more parents or grandchildren or both are likely to be found as co-resident members of the household. Table 1 reveals the kin composition of the household in Japan at the time of its first national census in 1920, in comparison with two different types of areas in North-western Europe, i.e. with England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as an ideal-typically simple family household regime and North-central Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, areas characterized as an European stem family region. The Japanese column is drawn from a one-in-thousand sample, but since the European samples consist mostly of rural settlements, cities are excluded from calculation.²

First, the table shows clearly, not just that the Japanese household was structurally different from the English simple household formation system, but also that the household unit did not extend laterally. The number of co-resident siblings of the head per 100 households was 13. This overall probability was not very different from that for North-central Europe. Of the 13 who co-resided only 1 was married, and there was little regional variation in this respect. Even in an area where the mean size of the co-resident kin group was larger, there was no tendency for more married siblings to live together. Japan had no tradition of joint family culture.

Secondly, the Japanese stem family household was different in composition from the European stem counterpart. As Arthur Wolf and Susan Hanley once remarked, one may think that “China is to Japan as Eastern is to Western Europe” since the Japanese family system could be considered as “a stem system of the Western European type”.³ In reality, however, the Japanese household was more likely than the European stem family to contain a co-residing parent, but far more conspicuous is a difference in the tendency to extend downwards. According to table 1, the probability of the Japanese household having co-residing grandchildren was 29 per 100 whereas that for North-central Europe was only 3. The fact that the average household in Japan extended vertically and in


both upward and downward directions is a snapshot of several stages of the family life cycle in one picture. There are at least two separable phases. One is the stage at which the household head co-resided with a married son, his wife and children, while the other sees the head retired and the son succeeding the headship. The contrast between the first and second columns of table 1, therefore, reflects structural differences between the two “stem” regions. In both, elderly people in their post-retirement phase were likely to live with their married child. Unlike the North-central European case, however, the Japanese elderly tended to live with their heir’s family even before giving up the headship of the household, *ie*.

Although the same term had often been used to describe family forms observed in areas on the European continent and in Japan, it should be made clear that the Japanese family system was *not* a stem system of the North-central European type.

This second observation implies that the *ie* was a going concern which was expected to exist through generations. Obviously, many households in the past became extinct: many more experienced periods off the normal course of the stem family life cycle. However, studies utilising nominative listings of village population in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have shown that dominant family life cycle patterns observed were variants of the stem family

Table 1: *Comparative household kin composition: Japan, 1920, in comparison with North-central Europe and England*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to household head</th>
<th>Number of co-resident people other than conjugal family unit (per 100 households)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japan, 1920 (Rural only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son/daughter-in-law</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephew/niece</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandchild</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N (‘000)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8,989)</td>
<td>(189)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


What is also suggested by those studies is that adoption was instrumental in order to continue the family line, but the taking-in of outside labor as live-in servants was not. It is certainly “not uncommon” that the young unmarried went into service, but life-cycle servants were not an integral part of workings of the *ie* system. Structurally, this system seems to have been built upon a very intensive mode of family farming in rice culture.\(^5\)

**Nuptiality**

Turning to the nuptiality side, there is some disagreement among scholars. By looking at the 1920 census figures, for example, Hajnal believed that Japan was one of the non-European populations, whereas Arthur Wolf and Susan Hanley claim that China was non-European but Japan was “European”. This is because “Japanese women have always married at a relatively late age” and the Japanese “have a long and well-established tradition of responding to changed economic circumstances by varying their age at marriage”.\(^6\)

Most of the village studies on which Wolf and Hanley based their judgement are from areas west of central Japan. It is now widely recognised that there was a considerable East-West variation in the age at marriage: lower in the East and higher in the West. A list of figures derived from the existing case studies shows that while an average of 13 cases was 20.6 years for women and 26.3 years for men, the female age varied from 17.3 to 23.9 and the male age from 21.4 to 29.3 (all the figures are adjusted to Western ages). All the low figures came from the North-east and central regions. A recently drafted paper by Satomi Kurosu, Noriko Tsuya and Kiyoshi Hamano on four villages in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provide us with an even clearer picture of traditional Japan’s marriage pattern and its regional variation.\(^7\)


\(^7\) One of the four is the oft-mentioned village of Nishijo located in the central region. See S. Kurosu, N.O. Tsuya and K. Hamano, “Regional Differentials in the Patterns of First Marriage in the Latter Half of Tokugawa Japan”, *Keio Economic Studies*, 36, no.1 (1999), 13-38.
them, the mean age at first marriage for females in two north-eastern villages was 16.7 while it was 22.5 for Nishijo in the central region, and 24.9 for a fishing village in the south-west. The corresponding age gaps between the spouses were 5.4, 8.7 and 5.4 respectively. For the north-east and central villages, calculation can be made for both “natives” and “migrants”. Females born in the village tended to marry younger. The mean age for those females was as low as 14.7 in the north-east and 21.0 in the central case, both being substantially lower than the averages for those who married in or married out. The same pattern was observable for males in the north-east, but not for the central village. It is, therefore, difficult to conclude that “the Japanese women have always married at a relatively late age”, and this conclusion is consistent with the finding from Table 1 concerning the stem family kin composition. But at the same time, it should be remembered that according to circumstances their age at first marriage could vary. In the south-western areas, it may have indeed reached a level comparable to the West European levels.

Moving on to the celibacy question, Kurosu, Tsuya and Hamano have found that despite the regional variation in the age at first marriage, almost all the women under observation married eventually. The proportion ever-married reached 99 per cent at age 50 in the case of the north-east, while it stood at 94 and 96 per cent in the central and south-west respectively. This confirms what Thomas Smith found for females in Nakahara, a village located not far from Nishijo in the four-village sample. On the other hand, Smith noted that universal marriage could not be observed for Nakahara males, whose celibacy rate tended to become higher if their land-holding status was lower. This is an interesting result as small holdings meant a limited access to family headship. However, a close look at data for the nearby village of Nishijo has revealed that much caution should be taken when the difference between the de jure and currently domiciled populations was not negligible, suggesting that the actual rate of male celibacy for Nakahara’s small-holders may have been somewhat lower. In short, there is no reason at this stage to doubt that virtually all people married in traditional Japan.

My final comment on the Wolf-Hanley proposition concerns how respon-

8. Since it is impossible to calculate ages according to the Gregorian calendar for the entire sample or possible only for a partial group of population in the case of the north-eastern and central villages, the ages given measure the number of yearly registrations from the birth to the exit in those cases. In those cases, the measured ages tend to be slightly higher than the Gregorian ages. The age for the south-western village is Gregorian.
10. Smith, Nakahara, ch. 6.
sive Tokugawa Japan’s nuptiality was to changing economic circumstances. The evidence quoted in their article was Hanley’s finding that in four villages of the west region proportions married rose when times were good and fell when times were bad, which was interpreted as the number of marriages responding to economic fluctuations. By applying similarly “crude” measures to data from another village in the west region, however, Kiyoshi Hamano found no correlation between the crude marriage rate (cmr) and the crude birth rate. Instead, the cmr was associated with the crude death rate. Since the female age at first marriage was positively correlated with the cmr, argues Hamano, higher death rates meant a greater opportunity for spinsters to marry at a fairly late age. On a much broader scale, it appears as if there were a certain association between the observed East-West contrast in the age at first marriage and levels of economic performance of the local area. Our common knowledge, however, is that areas in the west were economically more advanced than in the east. A lower age at first marriage, therefore, was not associated with economic betterment. This judgement is not inconsistent with the observation that the mean age of women at first marriage exhibited a tendency to rise in the long run (see figure 1).

In the statistical mirror
The foregoing arguments are based solely on village-level case studies. Regional or national averages of nuptiality measures are available only after the Meiji Restoration of 1869. Table 2 summarises statistical evidence from census and registration records for selected years between 1879 and 1940. The 1879 figures are from a pilot census taken only for one prefecture, but all the other years cover the whole country.

First of all, it is evident that celibacy was low in Japan. No proportions single of women in the age group 45-49 reached the 2 per cent mark while its general level for men was 2 to 3 per cent. As is suggested above, men’s mean age at first marriage, and hence their age-specific proportions married at local levels may have been influenced by fluctuating marriage age for non-inheriting sons, which in turn was likely to be affected by changing local conditions in economic livelihood. However, no trace of such variability can be detectable in national or regional averages such as those reported in table 2. It is probably safe to conclude that traditional Japan was a society of universal marriage.

Secondly, the gap between the mean registered age at first marriage and the singulate mean age at marriage (smam) was substantial. Although it is the mean age at marriage calculated from the civil registration records that has wide-

Table 2: *Japan’s nuptiality profile, 1879-1940*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age at marriage</th>
<th>Proportion single at age 45-49</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Registered First</td>
<td>SMAM</td>
<td>Registered First</td>
<td>SMAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:**

1. Registered ages at marriage from 1899 to 1940 are from the *Vital Statistics*, corresponding years. ‘All’ includes remarriages.

2. SMAMS and proportions married for 1920-1940 are calculated from the corresponding *National Census Reports*. The 1879 figures are for Yamanashi prefecture (former province of Kai) only. Calculated from the pilot census, *Kai no kuni genzai ninbetsu shirabe*

ly been cited, it is known that the registration of marriage before the second world war tended to be delayed more often than that of birth and death. According to SMAM figures which are believed to be better indicators of actual ages at marriage, women married before age 22 and men before 26 as far as the period prior to 1930 is concerned.

Thirdly, however, the two marriage age series in table 2 suggest that for the period 1879-1940 there was a slight but discernible upward trend for both sexes.

14. For historic China too, Zhongwei Zhao notes that unlike women, men’s proportions married in their 30s and 40s varied considerably among lineage populations, despite the fact that at societal level China has been described as a universally marrying, multiple-family population. Moreover, James Lee and Cameron Campbell have shown for a northern village that male celibacy was unmistakably higher among non-multiple family households. See Zhongwei Zhao, “Demographic Systems in Historic China: Some New Findings from Recent Research”, *Journal of the Australian Population Association*, 14 (1997), 201-232; and J. Lee and C. Campbell, *Fate and Fortune in Rural China: Social Organization and Population Behavior in Liaoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 139.
This is a finding consistent with the tendency shown in Figure 1 for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Both the Tokugawa and post-Tokugawa evidence, therefore, confirms the view that neither proto-industrialization in the period before the nineteenth century nor the economic take-off in the 1920s and 30s brought the mean marriage age down. The Japanese age at marriage tended to rise over the long run, irrespective of changing patterns of macro-economic change.¹⁵

Fourthly, those marriage age series agree that the age difference between men and women was four years in most cases, despite the above-mentioned rising trends over time. Given Kurosu, Tsuya and Hamano’s age gap figures, this is on the low side, but still should be considered rather wide.

The whole marriage pattern that has emerged bears no resemblance to what Peter Laslett calls the “west/central or middle” pattern in his four-region synthesis of the European household and family patterns, despite the label “stem family” used to describe both cases. Instead, on the face of it, it resembles the one identified for the Mediterranean region. In the areas south of the Alps, proportions marrying were “high” for both sexes. Yet women’s average age at first marriage was “low” but men’s was “high”, so that the age gap tended to be “wide”. And life-cycle service, which played a key role in the workings of the North-west European system, was “not uncommon”, but cannot have been widespread. It is worth adding that all the Mediterranean countries were “strong family” areas, and that even today the whole region can be contrasted with “weak family” countries such as the United States, England, Denmark and the Netherlands.¹⁶

However, Laslett’s catalogue of “procreational and demographic criteria” also includes another entry term, remarriage. It postulates that the proportion of widows remarrying was “very low” in Mediterranean as well as East European populations, “high” in Western Europe, and “very high” in West/central or middle areas of Europe. It should be realised that Laslett’s “middle” region corresponds largely to the “North-central” in my table 1 above. It is in this region where many historians claim to have found “stem family” forms from historic data. Is this, therefore, what we may expect to find in another stem family society too, i.e. traditional Japan?

2. Remarriage and mortality

European patterns

Remarriage is a missing variable in Hajnal’s framework.¹⁷ Laslett’s hypothesis is put forward as a speculation. There are of course studies of remarriage in the


past, but it seems that little has been done in order to place the concept in a broader, comparative demographic framework.

An obvious starting point is the influence of moral codes. Catholicism, for example, is hostile to divorce and remarriage, and many other religious teachings have acted similarly on women’s second marriages. In reality, however, not a negligible number of widows did marry a second time in the past. Even in a society like colonial Taiwan, for example, where for centuries, the Chinese cult of conjugal fidelity had been receiving “near-universal recognition as an ideal”, household registers of one area in the Taipei basin show that of 577 women examined, who were born between 1856 and 1920, 32 per cent remarried. With those over age 30 excluded, more than half of the women married a second time. This is because higher mortality implies more men and women re-entering the marriage market. In order to search for analytical clues, therefore, table 3 sets out female remarriage ratios in relation to changing levels of mortality for 13 countries of varying cultural backgrounds in late nineteenth-century Europe. The remarriage ratio here is defined as the number of remarriages to the total number of events, of which both marry for the first time. For the exercise in figure 1, female remarriages include divorcees as well as widows. The other variable used is the death rate of the 30-59-year-olds, i.e. the number of deaths in that age range divided by resident population of the same age group with both sexes combined.

The 13 European states in table 3 are grouped into three separate areas: the East, the North-west and the South. The grouping is a conventional one except for Bavaria. Having found that on a scatter diagram (figure 2) its locus is much closer to Italy and Spain than to any other West European countries, Bavaria is included in the South. The East is represented by Russia alone, and the North-west by Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Holland, Norway, Prussia and Sweden. These nine North-western countries are further grouped, according to their death rates.
Table 3: Female remarriage ratios and mortality levels: Europe in the third quarter of the nineteenth-century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ratio of female remarriages to first-marriages</th>
<th>Death rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All ages</td>
<td>30-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (Russia 1901-10)</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.0368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-west:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.0277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prussia</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.0257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>0.0250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.0184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.0205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.0216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.0297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.0296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavaria</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.0295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: M.G. Mulhall, *The Dictionary of Statistics*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge and Sons, 1899), 174, 382, for all the nineteenth-century data. Remarriage data are ‘mostly from observations of 10 years down to 1875’, while the period the death rates refer to varies from country to country: Belgium 1851-60, France 1856-65, England 1857-66, Austria, Bavaria, Holland, Italy, Norway, Prussia, Russia and Spain 1860-68, Denmark 1860-69, Sweden 1861-70. Twentieth-century Russian figures (in brackets) are from the *Statistika Rossiiskoi Imperii*. Note: Italicized figures are sub-regional means.

rates, into the high-mortality, moderate-mortality and low-mortality areas. As the sub-area means indicate, there is a close association between the two variables in the group of nine: the higher the death rate the higher the female remarriage ratio. In other words, in countries under what Hajnal called the North-west European family formation system, much of the observed variation in the frequency of female remarriage can be accounted for by differences in adult mortality. This
implies that increases and decreases of demand and supply in the remarriage market were dictated by mortality alone.

Two additional observations may be made. First, the loci of Bavaria and the two Mediterranean countries are significantly distant from this North-west European line. These South European countries showed much lower remarriage ratios with respect to their mortality levels. There must have been some structural deterrents acting on women’s remarriage, which would justify the separation of the south from the other nine countries. Second, European Russia comes right on the North-western line. Does this imply that the East European remarriage pattern could be understood within the same framework as for the North-west? Probably not, because there is a possibility that given the Orthodox Church’s attitudes to divorce, remarriage in Russia could have become very low if the mortality level had declined substantially, implying that an East-European line may have been steeper.
than the North-western one and intersected with it at a point where Russia is plotted on the diagram. Indeed, if Russia’s 1901-10 plot of the variables can be regarded as representing a separate locus within the same diagram’s remarriage-mortality field, and if the death rate for all ages is not a bad indicator of an age-specific rate, then it is likely that the locus for Russia in 1901-10 will be below Belgium and France’s and on Spain and Italy’s left in figure 1, suggesting that a decrease of mortality in the east brought remarriage frequency down more rapidly than in the North-west (an elasticity calculated from percentage changes over the two time periods suggests that a decrease in remarriage frequency was extremely sensitive to the decline in mortality. See table 5 below). With respect to remarriage too, therefore, Eastern Europe must have exhibited a separate pattern.

It is premature at this stage to say more about European remarriages, but it seems that much of the Hajnal-Laslett scheme of regional classification would probably work for the remarriage patterns too, except that it is difficult to separate Central Europe, as Laslett did, from the North-western region.

*Japanese exercise*

A similar cross-sectional exercise may be made for 46 prefectures of Japan in 1925, in order to examine the extent to which the frequency of female remarriages was accounted for by adult mortality. The remarriage variable used is exactly the same as for figure 2. The incidence of remarriage on average was marginally less frequent in Japan than in the whole European case (0.107 against 0.110) and marginally more frequent than in the two Mediterranean countries, Italy and Spain (0.092 and 0.109 respectively). On the other hand, the mortality variable chosen for the Japanese exercise is life-table probabilities of death ($n_q$) in the period 1921-25 for the same age group as for Europe. When the remarriage ratios are regressed on the mortality rate, the goodness of fit turns out to be rather poor, suggesting that there must have been more factors explaining variations in the incidence of remarriage at local levels. It should be noted, however, that the regression coefficient estimated is statistically significant (see $t$ ratio given in table 4), so that the impact of a change in the death rate can be gauged from the size of the regression coefficient with reasonable confidence.

Further break-down is possible for the Japanese remarriage tables, which reveals that divorce and widowhood exhibited rather different geographical profiles. Divorcees’ remarriage was more numerous in remote, agricultural prefectures, whereas in urbanized Tokyo and Osaka and their surrounding areas its frequency was on the low side. For widows’ remarriages, on the other hand, no meaningful association was found with urbanization at the prefectural level. This reflects a strange history of divorce in modern Japan. According to official statistics, the rate of divorce was “extraordinarily high” in early years of Meiji,
but there occurred an “abrupt” drop in one year after the new civil code came into effect, then declined steadily with progress in education, urbanization and economic growth until the 1960s. According to T. Kawashima and K. Steiner’s interpretations, divorce was “not frowned upon” and was frequent in a traditional setting where “lineage, not marriage, was sanctified”. Thus, the frequency of divorce tended to be greater in the countryside than in cities where the impact of industrialization and the growth of formal education was always felt more strongly. As a result the overall rate of divorce tended to decline with urbanization. For the purpose of the regression exercise here, therefore, the mixing of divorcees’ remarriage with that of widows may not be appropriate. By selecting widow remarriages only, as table 4 indicates, the fit has improved with slightly steeper slope of the regression line. In Japan too, remarriage was affected by adult mortality. 

In order to assess how strong this mortality effect was in the Japanese case, table 4 also compares the Japanese regression results with those for Northwestern Europe. In all the regression exercises the regression coefficient is statistically significant at the 1 per cent level, but its size is much smaller for Japan than for Europe. However, since the independent variables are not the same, comparison should be made in terms of elasticity (measuring a percentage

![Figure 2: Female age at first marriage: 43 villages in central Japan, 1675-1875.](image-url)
Table 4: Female remarriage ratio and mortality: cross-sectional regression results for Japanese prefectures, 1925 in comparison with estimates for nineteenth-century European countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Independent variable: Death rate for ages 30-59</th>
<th>Coefficient of determination ($R^2$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\overline{R}$</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan, 46 prefectures:</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows and divorcees</td>
<td>(2.47)</td>
<td>(-0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows only</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3.26)</td>
<td>(-0.82)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-western Europe, 9 countries:</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>-0.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7.64)</td>
<td>(-3.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
1. Japan: Remarriage ratios are from the 1925 Vital Statistics. Mortality rates are 30q30 from the Mizushima Prefectural Life Tables for 1921-25.
2. North-western Europe: Table 3.

change in the remarriage ratio with respect to a percentage change in mortality, calculated in this case at the sample means). The elasticities estimated from the given regression coefficients are reported in table 5, together with the one calculated by linking one time period to another in the Russian time-series. It clearly shows, first, that in all the three cultural regions, Japan as well as Eastern and Western Europe, the elasticities exceeded 1.0, suggesting that female remarriage was well responsive to mortality change. Secondly, however, judging from the size of elasticities, Japanese women’s remarriage was less elastic than West European women’s in relation to changing mortality. This contrast will be more pronounced if comparison is made with Eastern Europe, where it appears that the elasticity was astonishingly high.

Table 6 shows temporal changes in the remarriage ratio in Japan over the

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Table 5: Female remarriage elasticities: Japan in 1925 compared with nineteenth-century Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% change in remarriage ratio to % change in death rate</th>
<th>Widows and divorcees combined</th>
<th>Widows only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-section:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan, 1925</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-western Europe, 19th century</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-series:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia, 1866/1875–1901/10</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: See Tables 2-3.

Note: For the cross-section panel, the elasticities are calculated from the regression coefficients evaluated at sample means, viz $(\hat{y}/\hat{x}) ÷ (y/x)$, where $x$ and $y$ denote the sample means. For Russia, the elasticity is to a percentage change in the death rate for all ages, and is calculated by the following formula: $\left\{\frac{y_1-y_0}{(y_1+y_0)/2}\right\} ÷ \left\{\frac{x_1-x_0}{(x_1+x_0)/2}\right\}$, where $t_i$ is a ten-year average.

The table reveals that both remarriage and death probabilities were decreasing during the four decades in question. Divorcees' remarriage declined much faster than widows', reflecting the strange history after the Meiji Restoration. The tempo of the decline in the widow remarriage ratio, on the other hand, was more or less in line with that for the death rate of the 30-59-year-olds. Indeed, the calculated elasticity based on two benchmark years of 1899 and 1940 is closer to 1.0. Precisely it stands at 1.2 (see table 9 below), which falls between the two elasticity values, 1.1 and 1.3, derived from cross-sectional estimates reported in table 5.

Village dimensions

Such a low elasticity can mean either (1) that remarriage took place whenever the continuation of a particular ie is in danger even when the societal level of death rate was relatively low, or (2) that there were widows who want to stay away from the remarriage market even when the general level of mortality was relatively high, or both. Micro-level data are required to examine these behavioral questions.

The Kurosu, Tsuya and Hamano paper on four Tokugawa villages in three regions of Japan, to which I referred to in the previous section, offers us suggestive information about contexts in which women’s remarriage took place. Three
of the four were farming villages with solid peasant classes. Two of them were in an agriculturally underdeveloped area in the north-east, while the other, Nishijo, was in a fertile alluvial plain of the central region. On the other hand, located at the tip of a peninsula of the south-western island of Kyushu and surrounded by the sea on three sides, a fourth village’s mode of production was very different from the rest. It was a fishing village. Land meant very little to the villagers. Unlike the vast majority of the Japanese village communities of the day, its family and social life must have been less tightly structured. According to Kurosu, Tsuya and Hamano, the proportion of first marriages not disrupted until the end of the wife’s reproductive span varied from village to village. It was 27 per cent in the agriculturally disadvantaged north-east, whereas more than 40 per cent completed their first marriage in the central farming village and the south-western fishing settlement. Percentages remarried were also different. As high as 70 per cent remarried until 50 years of age in the north-east, while it was 25 per cent in the central and 55 per cent in the south-western fishing village. It was widows’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ratio of female remarriages to first-first marriages</th>
<th>Spinster-widower remarriages</th>
<th>Death rate: All ages</th>
<th>Death rate: 30-59</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widows</td>
<td>Divorcees</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>Widowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>0.0405</td>
<td>0.1578</td>
<td>0.1983</td>
<td>0.1582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>0.0344</td>
<td>0.0990</td>
<td>0.1334</td>
<td>0.1226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>0.0356</td>
<td>0.0700</td>
<td>0.1056</td>
<td>0.1146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>0.0316</td>
<td>0.0526</td>
<td>0.0842</td>
<td>0.0937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Calculated from the Vital Statistics, corresponding years.

Note: ‘Death rate for 30-59’ refers to deaths in the 30-59 age group in relation to the total resident population in the same age group, with both sexes combined, for a given year, while ‘death rate for all ages’ (i.e. crude death rate) is an average of the five-year period ending in the year specified. The 1940 death rates do not include casualties in battlefields abroad. Age-specific population totals are from the corresponding Statistical Yearbooks.

remarriage rate that was particularly variable. Their rate was very low for Nishijo in the central region, 16 per cent, as against 42 and 49 per cent for the north-east and south-west respectively.

There seems to be two factors accounting for the observed variances. One is the mode of production and the other mortality. Take the south-western fishing village. It seems that mortality was not high there. No estimates of life table measures have so far been made, but the general level of crude death rate (\( \text{CDR} \)) was a little lower than that for Nishijo. Such a moderate nature of mortality was reflected in a higher percentage of completed marriages (49 per cent), but did not result in lower remarriage rates. Indeed, widows’ rate of remarriage was the highest of all the three cases (49 per cent). Undoubtedly much ought to be done for us to be able to have a clearer picture of the village’s nuptiality pattern. Considering the recent finding that in the village’s population registers were found unusually numerous prenuptial pregnancies, however, it is likely that a different mode of production and livelihood gave rise to somewhat different institutions of marriage and procreation.

Turning to the villages of peasant farming, it is possible to see the level of remarriage frequency shifting downwards with a decline in the mortality level. In the north-east, famines took place more frequently than in other regions, the CDRs fluctuated more violently, and the estimated range of life expectancy was from 34 to 36 years,\(^2\) while we find that the percentage of completed first marriages was low (27 per cent) and the rate of women’s remarriage relatively high (42 per cent). In the central village of Nishijo, on the other hand, the expectation of life was higher, in a range of 37-40 years,\(^2\) so that we can see more first marriages completed (43 per cent) and the rate of female remarriage lowered (16 per cent).

**Micro-stories**

The remarriage rate in Nishijo was so low that it is worth dwelling on why so many widows did not remarry in that stem-family village society. Only one in six widows re-entered the marriage market in sharp contrast with divorcees, of whom three in four remarried. Recently Kiyoshi Hamano and I have had a close look at the individual cases behind the hundred-year averages and found the following suggestive facts.\(^3\)

First, divorce in Nishijo was an event more likely to happen to a daughter who inherited her own \( \text{ie} \), than to a woman who married into the husband’s \( \text{ie} \). There are altogether 38 cases in which first marriage ended before the woman reached 40 years of age. Of the 38 there were nine divorce cases. Of the nine divorcees seven were inheriting daughters whereas only one inheriting woman

\(^2\) Saito and Hamano, “Tokugawa noson ni okeru saikon to ie no keisho”, 27-33.
was found in the group of 26 widows. In other words, it was her adopted husband who was divorced, and the inheriting daughter was more likely to bring another partner in. The break-up of the first marriage by divorce took place in a much shorter period after marriage than by the death of the husband. In all the divorce cases, the duration of marriage until its dissolution was 10 years or under with the mean age of women at divorce being 25. This explains much of the high propensity of divorced women to remarry.\footnote{It is interesting to note that in colonial Taiwan too, uxorilocal marriages (with which men were marrying in) were more prone to divorce than other forms of marriage. See A.P. Wolf and Chieh-shan Huang, \textit{Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), chapter 13.}

Secondly, age at which marriage ended by the death of the husband can also account for widows’ remarriages. When the woman was under 30, 66 per cent remarried, but the percentage became 22 per cent if aged 31-40 and zero if over 41. Another reason why so few widows remarried was the presence of children. Many studies have emphasized that small children could be a deterrent to remarriage. However, it should be realized that so many widows in Nishijo chose not to remarry at a relatively old age when it was unlikely for them to have small children. In other words, the probability of Nishijo women to remarry was greater with small children than without.

Most of the widowed stayed with the dead husband’s family. Few chose to go back to their parents’ home. Indeed, there were only three such cases out of the 38 women whose marriage was disrupted before they reached age 40. Thus, by focusing on a group of 35, those who remarried are compared with those who did not. From this comparison, two contrasting features emerge concerning children. The mean number of children who were present at the time of marriage termination was 1.5 for those who remarried and 2.5 for the other group. This one-child difference is statistically significant at the 5 per cent level. Another feature is that the mean age of the oldest child was 3 years older for those who did not remarry than for those who married (8.8 as against 5.8). Again this age difference is statistically significant at the 5 per cent level. Even if widows are to be singled out, these contrasts hold (although the statistical significance level is reduced due to a decreased sample size). In fact, the mean number of children was 2.7 and the mean age of the oldest child 9.8 for widows who did not remarry, which strongly suggests that it was not the existence of small children which prevented women from re-entering the marriage market.

My view is that the women’s decision was in line with the \textit{ie} strategies. The \textit{ie} was conceived as an institution to be perpetuated. Adoption was one of such strategies taken when there were no sons. Remarriage was another when one was left with young children who still needed maternal attention and care. However, this implies that the widow would not remarry when the child to
whom the headship would eventually go, was already grown up. If the heir, wether a boy or a girl, was still well below a threshold age, say 16, then an option was for the widow to succeed the headship as a caretaker head. Indeed, of 19 widows who did not remarry 16 became the head of the household after the death of the husband. Of the 16, 12 were cases in which the headship was actually handed down to her child by the year the population register series ended (and in one case it went to a grandson).

Two additional points should be made. One is the fact that of the 16 cases of husband-widow succession, ten took place in families who owned no land. They belonged to the poorest peasant class in the village community called mizunomi. They were not farm laborer households, but tenant farmers who had to rent all the pieces of arable land from wealthy farmers. Despite their disadvantaged standing in the village, however, nine out of the ten did successfully complete the process of headship transfer from the widow to a child eventually. The wish to perpetuate the ie was not confined to wealthy landholders. It was felt equally strongly among those poor peasant families and was shared by their married-in members as well.

The second point is concerned with the relationship between the widow and her parents-in-law. One may think that a majority of the 19 widows did not remarry by pressure from their parents-in-law who, as was usually the case, did not want to see the daughter-in-law bringing a stranger into the house. However, this conjecture does not hold since only 2 out of the 19 were cases in which the widow had at least one co-resident parent-in-law. It appears, therefore, that the vast majority of the widows who had married into the husband’s ie chose to stay on in that ie and not to re-marry all at their own wish.

In sum, under the Japanese system of stem family, it was likely that a sizeable number of remarriages always took place if adult mortality was not negligibly low, because remarriage was undoubtedly one of the measures to keep the family line. But at the same time, there were a significant number of widows who wanted to stay away from the remarriage market. They chose to do so because there was a job they thought more important. It was to keep the household economy going until the heir would become old enough to take up the family headship from her. All this, if substantiated in future research, will undoubtedly account for much of the low elasticity estimated between mortality and remarriages for Japan in the past.

3. East Asian contexts

Statistical exposition

The third task of this chapter is to set the foregoing findings in the East Asian contexts. Table 7 looks at basic marriage measures for colonial Taiwan and Korea, two East Asian countries for which we have comparable statistics.
The mean age at which people married was young and celibacy low in both countries. This was particularly pronounced for the Korean female population. They got married soon after they reached puberty and remaining celibate was literally unthinkable for them. Indeed, the female age at first marriage there was as low as 16.8 and less than 0.05 per cent of women aged 45-49 remained single, far lower than the corresponding Taiwanese as well as Japanese figures. Similarly the male age at marriage was lower in Korea than in Taiwan, but the proportion of Korean men remaining single in the 45-49 age group, 8 per cent, was high, much higher than their Taiwanese and Japanese counterparts. The Korean and Taiwanese marriage patterns, in short, were typically non-European, but the wide gender gap observed in Korea needs a cautionary note.

Turning to table 8, which sets out remarriage measures, it is apparent that there is another difference between Taiwan and Korea. Taiwanese women remarried far more frequently than Koreans. Indeed, the Korean remarriage ratio in 1938 was on the low side even by both European and Japanese standards (cf. tables 3 and 6), whereas the Taiwanese levels of remarriage ratios in earlier years were surprisingly high. No country figures so far known were comparable to Taiwan’s 1906 level of 0.6 and even to the 1915 level of 0.37. Another surprising fact to be noticed in table 8 is the speed with which the frequency of remarriage in Taiwan declined over time. Such decreases did take place in many countries; for example in Japan, as indicated in table 6 above, the remarriage ratio declined from 0.2 to 0.08 over the four decades, whereas Taiwan’s decline was from a much higher level, i.e. from 0.6 to 0.1 over a less than 40-year period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Singulate mean age at marriage</th>
<th>Proportion single at ages 45-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koreans</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Taiwan: Calculated from the 1930 Census Report. Japanese, Chinese from mainland and other foreign residents are not included.
Korea: Tai Hwan Kwon et al., _The Population of Korea_ (Seoul: Population and Development Studies Center, Seoul National University, 1975), 46, 48-49. Japanese and other foreign residents are not included.
Taiwan
Any decrease in the remarriage ratio is an increase in the proportion of those marrying for the first time. The phenomenal increase of this first-first marriage as well as the equally phenomenal decrease in the incidence of remarriage in early twentieth-century Taiwan already invited a scrutiny of the available statistics by George Barclay.25 He maintained that in the early years of this century, differential mortality in the early stages of life led to a shortage of marriageable women, creating better prospects for widows and divorced women to marry again with not only widowers and divorced men, but sometimes bachelors as well. He did not forget to note that during this process the general level of mortality was also falling, but it was the unbalanced marriage market that was stressed. However, as table 8 shows, death rates had also been high in these early years of the twentieth century and the tempo of decline since then was swift. Such a swift decline in mortality must have had a similarly strong impact on the incidence of remarriage.

This impact is gauged by the size of elasticity as reported in table 9, which compares Taiwan with Japan. Both calculations are for widows’ remarriages only, based on percentage changes between the two benchmark years. The Japanese figure is calculated by linking 1899 to 1940, whereas for both the starting and end periods in Taiwan two benchmark years are averaged out since the declining processes were less smooth than for Japan. It is clear from this table that the decrease in the incidence of remarriage in relation to the decline in mortality was more elastic in Taiwan than in Japan, and this can visually be evident from figure 3.

Korea
Also plotted in figure 3 is the locus of Korea. The 1938 mortality rate in Korea was comparable to the Japanese levels, in fact marginally lower than the latter.26 Does this mean that Korea exhibited another remarriage pattern? There are two lines of thinking. One is to see it as part of the pattern identified for colonial Taiwan. Judging from the diagram, Korea’s 1938 position is certainly not inconsistent with the shape of the Taiwanese loci. If this were the case, we should think that at a time when mortality levels had been much higher, remarriage must have been far more frequent in Korea too, another Confucian country where remarriage was once prohibited by early Choson kings. Given a conjectured range of CDR in the nineteenth century being 32 to 37 and the expectation of life

26. It is likely, however, that the death rates computed directly from official statistics in colonial Korea were understated to a greater extent than those for colonial Taiwan, although it is equally likely that Korean advances in medical care and public health was rapid in the 1930s and 40s.
Table 8: Female remarriage ratios and mortality levels: Taiwan, 1906-40, and Korea, 1938.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ratio of female remarriages to first-first marriages</th>
<th>Spinsters-widower remarriages</th>
<th>Death rate: All ages</th>
<th>30-59</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widows</td>
<td>Divorces</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>0.3785</td>
<td>0.2300</td>
<td>0.6085</td>
<td>0.1011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>0.2359</td>
<td>0.1313</td>
<td>0.3673</td>
<td>0.0798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>0.1326</td>
<td>0.0955</td>
<td>0.2281</td>
<td>0.0777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>0.0992</td>
<td>0.0837</td>
<td>0.1829</td>
<td>0.0711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>0.0498</td>
<td>0.0592</td>
<td>0.1090</td>
<td>0.0655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koreans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>0.0248</td>
<td>0.0191</td>
<td>0.0439</td>
<td>0.0675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Taiwan: Calculated from T’aiwan wu-shi-i nien lai t’ung chi (compiled by the Taiwan Provincial Government in 1946), tables 49, 58, 64, 70 and 89. Both remarriage and death statistics exclude Aborigines.
Korea: Remarriage ratios are calculated from the 1938 Vital Statistics. The death rate for ages 30-59 is from the 1940 volume, with the population breakdowns from the corresponding Census Report. The death rate for all ages is for 1935-40, taken from Kwon et al., The population of Korea (1975), 23.

at birth around 30,27 this would mean that in the past century Korea’s remarriage ratio may have stood at a point comparable to Taiwan in 1906. It is hard to substantiate this speculation at this stage of research, but there is a piece of evidence reported in a recent paper by Sungjong Paik on Cheju Island in the early nineteenth century, which challenges the conventional view that divorce and remarriage by women were all but forbidden in traditional Korea.28

The second possibility, on the other hand, is to think that Korea was different even within East Asia. A glance at some of the recent historical studies of household and family reveals, first, that from the seventeenth century onwards

the proportion of nuclear family households had never been below 50 per cent, which is interpreted as having reflected unfavorable demographic conditions in the past. Secondly, the proportion of “stem family” households was on the increase. According to case studies using village household registers, it was a mere 7 per cent in 1630, increasing to 15 per cent in 1756, then to 32 per cent in 1807, which is comparable to the 1955 census result. All this seems to suggest that traditional Korea became more stem-oriented. Partly it was a result of the Japanese colonial policy of “converting diverse patterns of the Choson family into a single Japanese pattern of the stem family”.

Historians working on household registers maintain that until the early eighteenth century there were no set rules concerning headship succession and co-residence with the retiring parents. Indeed, cases in which the headship did not go to the eldest son were numerous in the seventeenth century. This pattern was gradually replaced by the one with a one-son succession rule and primogeniture during the period from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. It was in this period, well before Japan’s annexation of the Korean peninsula, that the notion of patriarchal lineal line was firmly established, not only among the landed elite, but commoner farm families as well. What these studies point to is Korea being a stem-fam-

30. See a summary table in Nam-Il Kim, Soon Choi and Insook Han Park, “Rural Family and Community Life in South Korea: Changes in Family Attitudes and Living Arrangements for the Elderly”, in: Lee-Jay Cho and Moto Yada (eds), Tradition and Change in the Asian Family (Honolulu: East-West Center, 1994), 290. There is a translation problem here. Kim, Choi and Park chose the term “head family” for the word originally written in Chinese characters, but the same characters can also be translated as “stem family”. The definition given in their paper is “a household in which a father and his eldest married son live together with their family members”, which is undoubtedly a kind of stem family household. 31. Hahn Hanhee, “Stem Family in Korea: Old and New”, in: Fauve-Chamoux and Ochiai (ed.) House and the Stem Family in EurAsian Perspective, 320-338.
ily society. However, there are other pieces of evidence against this line of argument. First, a close look at the summary data on historical household structures reveals that although percentages never exceeded the 10 per cent mark, “other extended or multiple” forms also increased from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. According to case studies, such complex households were formed by the marriage of a younger son, who tended to stay on for a limited period in order, probably, to “show the bride the traditions and customs of the groom’s family”.

Secondly, Jae-Seuk Choi’s pioneering work on household registers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provides us with data comparable to the Japanese household’s kin composition shown in table 1 above. The kin composition in Choson Korea turns out to be surprisingly simple. According to the 1630 and 1756 data, on average 11 parents, 10 siblings, 4 daughters-in-law, and 1

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grandchild are found to have co-resided per 100 households. The presence of parents and siblings was not negligible but that of daughters-in-law and grandchildren was. It may be that both traditional Korea and Japan may be characterized as vertically constructed, but the structure of Korea’s co-resident domestic group was, in comparison with that of Japan, centred more on the father-son relationship and showed a weaker tendency towards downward extension. Indeed, if the 1630 composition is compared with the 1756 one, it is the number of co-resident parents and siblings, but not that of co-resident younger generations, that was increased. The so-called Korean “stem family” was not a variant of the stem family as exemplified by the Japanese ie, but leaned towards a multiple-family system. Although it is difficult to know how these tendencies in household structure were related to marriage and remarriage variables, it is not unlikely that the combination of this multiple-family orientation, the ideology of patriarchal family succession and the imposition by the Japanese colonial government of the ie model of stem family may have kept the incidence of remarriage at a low level throughout the modern period in Korean history.

In short, at this state of knowledge it is not quite clear exactly where Korea should be placed in the comparative context. Undoubtedly a lot more research has to be done in this East-Asian field. At the moment, however, it appears that Japan’s position seen from the remarriage-mortality elasticity was fundamentally different from its East-Asian neighbors as well as from both simple family and stem family populations in North-western Europe, suggesting that it represented one separate type of nuptiality pattern under another stem family system.

4. Concluding remarks

My tentative conclusion is that it is possible to distinguish three separate remarriage as well as marriage patterns in the past. In simple-family, North-western Europe, the mean age at marriage was high, the incidence of remarriage relatively frequent, but the proportion remaining single also high, while the remarriage elasticity with respect to mortality change was intermediate. In joint-family societies such as Russia and China, where universal marriage was the rule and most married young, the remarriage elasticity was very high, so that remarriage could become extremely frequent when mortality stayed high, but if mortality levels fell substantially, then the remarriage market would diminish swiftly. In contrast to either of these two, Japan – whose marriage pattern was somewhere in between in the sense that although celibacy was rare, marriage age was a little higher than that in the joint-family areas – exhibited a distinctive remarriage pattern. In this stem-family society the pro-

34. Other categories are negligible. Calculated from Choi, Hankook, 403 and 445, all being unweighted averages of the 1630 and 1756 figures. N is 660 for 1630 and 183 for 1756. No kin composition data are given for 1807.
portion of widows remarrying cannot be said to have been “very high”, as Peter Laslett speculated, but it was not quite low either. Its remarriage pattern is characterized by a low elasticity with respect to mortality change. It is thought to have reflected, first, that under a stem-family system remarriage was always instrumental in keeping family line, but secondly, that women chose to stay away from the remarriage market if they thought that their family would not go extinct if they did not bring in another adult male worker.

What other countries and cultural areas belonged to this “third” pattern? Korea certainly did not. Southern Europe might, given its seeming resemblance in the pattern of male and female ages at first marriage, but as Paolo Viazzo (in this volume) and other scholars argue, it is likely that it was not a homogeneous area in terms of both marriage and household formation. For remarriage, the area cannot be regarded as homogeneous either. As Massimo Livi-Bacci demonstrates, regional variation even in one Mediterranean country, Italy, was so wide,35 that it is difficult to assume that there was the southern tendency, not to mention the question of how to accommodate Bavaria in Southern Europe. Such a volatile pattern of geographical variation did not exist in the case of Japan. As I have shown elsewhere, even the existence of a conspicuously large and complex household composition pattern found in north-eastern Japan can be accounted for by a particular set of demographic factors. A little more problematic is a south-western custom of ultimogeniture and its associated features, but there is no conclusive evidence indicating that it was not a variant of the stem family system.36 The marriage and remarriage pattern identified for traditional Japan, therefore, should be considered a societal tendency. At this stage of research, it is not certain whether the same pattern may be found as local, if not societal, tendencies in other “stem-family” areas. It is clear that what Lutz Berkner called stem families in Central Europe was in fact compatible with the North-west European system, but there were other types of stem family in Europe.37 Whether the latter types could be regarded as variants of the third pattern identified here will remain an issue to be resolved in future research.

The tripartition of marriage and remarriage patterns has implications for various issues in comparative history. One of such issues is the question of servanthood. Another is how to place gender and work in the Hajnal framework. Since space does not allow me to go for a full discussion, I should just like to give an outline of my argument on these related issues.

37. Hajnal, “Two Kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation System”, 70.
A simplistic approach to the second question is to relate the status of women in a given society directly to the earning capability of the women in family economy. It has been argued, for example, that under the codes of joint family system women’s role was reproductive rather than productive, so that their economic contribution could not be greater in the East than in the West of the Hajnal line. It is apparent, however, that this is too crude a comparison. It is essential to bring life-cycle events in, i.e. to look at the “distribution of specific sorts of labor throughout female life” by distinguishing a proto-industrial sort from a peasant farming sort of labor. This is what Hill Gates tried for by focusing on girls’ as well as women’s proto-industrial work in China and North-western Europe (in this volume). Her accounts probably suffice to dispel the stereotyped image of Chinese women being less productive than their North-west European counterparts, but will turn out to be not quite sufficient if comparison is to be tripartite. The question here is how to place Japanese women’s, particularly ever-married women’s work in this comparative perspective.

Japan’s proto-industrialization too mobilized female labor. The Tokugawa and Meiji women spun, reeled and wove for the market just as Chinese women did. However, the Japanese women worked also in the fields. Indeed, from the story of 16 widows in the village of Nishijo in Section 2, we know that they did take over the deceased husband’s role as cultivators and most of them combined successfully this additional task with that of mothering and householding. It is here that another criterion is needed. Did they work because poverty forced them to do so? Undoubtedly much of proto-industrialization at both ends of Eurasia can be accounted for by this factor, so were almost all kinds of waged work. This implies that the wealthier the farm family, the less likely the women worked for piece rates and other forms of wage earnings. However, if what the Nishijo story tells us is that women were willing to take up additional productive tasks as household imperatives, then it is expected that they would increase their working hours if they thought it necessary. Indeed, all the evidence suggests that hours actually worked by married women did increase during the long-run process of Japan’s agricultural growth. According to a 1933 survey, moreover, women aged 31-50 worked longer than the 16-20-year-olds (1789 as against 1241 hours per year, including handicraft and other non-agricultural activities), and among the married, it was the women of wealthier owner-occupier households who worked hardest. Women on larger farms spent 11 per cent more hours in farming than those on smaller farms. Earnings from farming as percentage of the total household income were greater for the large farms than the small farms (78 as against 66 per cent). The former had marginally more help from hired labor than the latter, 4.9 as against 3.4 as percentage of the total hours worked on farm, but most of those extra hands were employed by the day, not on a yearly, live-in basis.
All this indicates that whenever additional demands for work occurred, it was women, especially married women, but not outside labor, who took up such extra burden. This tendency explains why live-in service was not an integral part of the Japanese family system. The lack of life-cycle servants in traditional Japan was accounted for, not by the size of household as in joint-family countries, but by the elasticity of women’s supply of work in response to increasing demands from household economics. To the extent that their propensity to work was in accordance with the stem-family strategies, their work pattern was not inconsistent with the marriage and remarriage pattern.

38. See Saito, “Gender, Workload and Agricultural Progress”, 141, 143.
9
Strategies for managing household resources in rural North India

Monica Das Gupta
Introduction: The Hajnal hypothesis

Since Malthus’ discussion of the “nuptiality valve”, it is widely known that long before the onset of marital fertility decline in Europe, a substantial degree of population control was achieved by postponing marriage or permanent celibacy when resources were scarce.\(^1\) This homeostatic mechanism helped to regulate the balance of population and resources, which was assumed not to exist in joint family systems with partible inheritance and early universal marriage. This idea was further elaborated by Davis and subsequently by Hajnal,\(^2\) into a theoretical formulation of the implications of contrasting kinship systems for fertility behavior.

Davis contrasted the kinship and marriage systems of Europe with those of South and East Asia and argued that the logic of the joint family system offers few disincentives for high fertility. In stem families, individuals are responsible for their own economic situation, and have to acquire an adequate resource base before they can marry and have children. When the resource base is thin, many of them are unable to marry and reproduce, and many others would marry late and have a short reproductive career. By contrast, in joint families a couple is absorbed into a larger economic enterprise in which the responsibility of making ends meet is shared within the larger household.

Hajnal developed the contrast between the kinship and demographic regimes of preindustrial northern European stem family systems and the joint family systems of India, China and Tuscany. In Northern Europe, households had a substantial proportion of unrelated people who were servants in the household. The age at marriage was high, and the great majority of married people were in charge of their own household. The aged tended to live separately from their married children, and it was also common for children to be sent by their parents to live and work in other households under the system of “circulation of

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1. Acknowledgements: An earlier version of this paper was presented at a seminar held in Stanford University. Comments from Theo Engelen, Hill Gates, Paolo Viazzo, Arthur Wolf and several other participants are gratefully acknowledged.


servants”. By contrast, in the joint family systems he found that there are few non-relatives in the households. Children live with their parents, and aged parents live mostly with their children. The age at marriage is lower, and it is common for married sons not to be in charge of the household but to live with their parents or brothers.

These contrasts are brimming with implications for anthropological and demographic theory, but these are not developed much in Hajnal’s article. The only direct link drawn between these systems of household formation and demographic regimes is one of the potential implications for fertility of the system of circulation of servants. Hajnal discusses the system of “lifecycle service”, whereby people would work for other households and try to save up enough money to marry. This obviously made for an older average age at marriage and lower fertility. Hajnal goes further to suggest that “the institution of service was probably an essential part of the mechanism by which marriage could be delayed, with the result that population growth was under partial control. Populations with joint household systems lack that mechanism”.  

Essentially, these arguments conclude that there are few constraints on high fertility in joint family systems: because (1) the costs of childrearing are not borne solely by the parents but by the joint household as a whole, and (2) early and universal marriage for women. Subsequent research in India and China have shown that these conclusions are wrong, because they overlook the possibility that the household may want to regulate reproduction to avert threats to its continued economic viability. In a joint family system, the household is in a position to make effective joint decisions to regulate fertility at the household level. One way to do this is to regulate the marriage of their sons, to reduce the number of members in the next generation of the patrilineage. This is perfectly compatible with universal marriage for women, given female infanticide and excess female mortality. Another way is for other household members to make inputs into young couple’s childbearing decisions, and this is a feature of joint families that is widely noted in India and in South Asia as a whole. In combination with restrictions on husband-wife relations, these formed powerful controls on reproduction.

This paper begins by summarizing some key features of the West European stem family and the joint family system of marriage, inheritance, and control of access to resources, to illustrate how they influence childbearing behavior. It goes on examine the process of fertility regulation in rural Punjab. Combining

3. Hajnal, “Two kinds of preindustrial household formation system”, 481.
the approaches of historical and anthropological research with that of demographic surveys, it shows that peasant families in this society did indeed traditionally use marriage regulation and control of marital fertility to keep family size in line with available land.

I Managing population and resources in stem and joint families

In the North European stem family system, property was passed on either intact to one child (unigeniture) or the bulk of it was passed on to one child and smaller shares given to other children. Since the system was essentially patrilineal, the inheritance normally passed in the male line. However, there was a good deal of flexibility in this principle, such that if there were no sons a daughter and her husband could inherit the property. It could also be passed on to non-kin of the owners’ choice, such as an employee who had won the owners’ trust. The main objective was to ensure the continuity of the estate, and maintaining the family line was a secondary objective.

The central event in the household lifecycle was the transfer of property to the heir, which often took place at the time of his marriage. At some point of their aging, the parents would decide that it was time for them to retire, and would transfer the property formally to the heir. Through marriage, the heir formed a new partnership to manage the property and run the household. It was common for a formal retirement contract to be drawn up, specifying the support to be provided by the heir to the retired parents.

Non-heirs or the lesser heirs would leave the main estate at the time of the property transfer if they had not already left before this, and would make a living

5. The discussion in this section draws on Monica Das Gupta, “Lifeboat versus Corporate Ethic: social and demographic implications of stem and joint families”, *Social Science and Medicine, 49* (2), (1999), 173-184.
through whatever ecological niches might be available. One option for them was
to find work as laborers on other farms, and sometimes they could save enough
from this to establish a household and raise a family. In times of urban expan-
sion non-agrarian employment could also be found. Some might be able to
remain for some time with their retired parents. The heir had few obligations to
these people, although they were usually their own siblings.

Here we term this a “lifeboat ethic”, whereby the social and economic
position of the farming family was effectively maintained by removing or highly
circumscribing the potential claims of other kin to support from the household.
Even the claims of the parents were clearly circumscribed. The estate was passed
on largely intact. In many ways this must have acted as an incentive to be inno-
native, both for the heir who did not have to share the benefits of innovation, and
for the others whose survival depended on being able to extract a living from
their environment.

The joint family system of North India and China has a very different log-
ic.7 To begin with, sons inherit equal shares of the property, although one son
may have the use of additional land to support parents. Transfer of property and
managerial authority takes place gradually, beginning with the sons working
under the father’s direction, and moving on to the sons taking over some of the
managerial decisions as the father ages. Gradually the father becomes only a tit-
ular head. The sons move from cultivating their land jointly, to cultivating it sep-
arately, and later to formalizing the transfer and division of the estate. This last
step often takes place after the father’s death.

Marriage is not a central event in the household lifecycle. Children may
marry at any point, and sons’ wives can be incorporated into the household
whether or not the son is financially independent. The household and property
management is conducted by the unit of the father and his sons, with the help of
the women married into the family. Thus marriage does not create a new part-
nership which is of much significance, other than importing another woman
into the household to bear children and carry out the other tasks assigned to

7. See for example, Monica Das Gupta, “Lifecourse perspectives on women’s autonomy and health outcomes”,
American Anthropologist, 97 (3) (1995b), 481-491; Deborah Davis and Stevan Harrell (eds.) Chinese Families in the
Post-Mao Era (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Maurice Freedman, Lineage Organization in South-
eastern China (London: Athlone Press and New York: Humanities Press, 1969); Hill Gates, China’s Motor: a thou-
sand years of petty capitalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996); Francis L.K. Hsu, Under the Ancestors’ Shadow
(New York: Columbia University Press 1948); Irawati Karve, Kinship Organization in India (Bombay: Asia
Publishing House, 1965); Tom G. Kessinger, Vilyatpur (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Pauline
Kolenda, Regional Differences in Family Structure in India (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1987); Arthur Wolf and
Chieh-shan Huang, Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), and
females. A more important event is the birth of a grandson, which signals the continuation of the family line.

All those born into the household have a claim on the household estate to help establish them in life. Sons, of course, inherit property directly, and it is the responsibility of the father and brothers to use household resources to arrange for daughters’ marriages. These claims do not expire with formal transfer of property, as brothers are responsible for looking after unmarried siblings and launching them in adult life. After marriage, a girl continues to visit her natal home and receive the ritual and material supports due to her, whether or not her brothers have divided their property. It is rare for brothers to refuse to provide this support, and such refusal would be viewed as a scandalous infraction of norms. Parents, too, have a claim to support by their sons. Thus the sons’ claim over their property is far less complete than that of a heir in a stem family system, since the other members of the household continue to hold residual claims on the estate.

It is common for married brothers to live together for some part of the household lifecycle, and form separate households gradually as their own children grow. Thus parents may live together with more than one married son and the unmarried children, or they may live with only one son. On the ground, the composition of the household may be very similar in the joint and stem family systems, consisting for example of a nuclear family with or without grandparents in residence. However, the normative underpinning of the system is quite different: in the North European stem family, the residual claims of other household members are minimal compared to the situation in the Chinese or North Indian joint family.

Here we term the latter a “corporate ethic”, since all the members of the family are perceived as having claims to the family resources. The important point is that the household functions as a corporation, with the men of different generations forming the central members of the corporation and the birth of sons ensuring its continuity from one generation to another. Women have primary rights of maintenance from their parents’ household before marriage and from their husband’s household after marriage, with continuing rights to visit and receive help in certain lifecycle rituals from her parents’ family. The main point is to ensure the continuity of the family rather than the household / estate, and the estate is managed such that the family can meet its goals.

Of course, there is a great deal of variation on the ground in the operation of family systems. In stem families, there is much variation in the strictness with which the basic principle of unigeniture is applied as opposed to giving other children some minor share of the property. Moreover, it is does not necessarily follow from the principle of unigeniture that the transfer of property and managerial authority should be sudden as opposed to gradual, from father to appoint-
ed heir. The transfer seems to have been discontinuous in Northern Europe, but in other cultures it could be gradual without compromising the main principle of keeping the estate intact, as in Japan. In the latter case intergenerational relationships are likely to be smoother, despite unigeniture.

II Pre-transitional homeostatic mechanisms in rural Punjab

Before the demographic transition, a variety of adjustment mechanisms were used in this society to try to maintain the balance between population and resources. These were very important for families and communities to continue to thrive despite the substantial fluctuations in population size caused by large swings in mortality levels. This discussion of the homeostatic mechanisms in the study region is based largely on analysis of genealogies and accompanying histories. These show how different branches of lineages grew or failed to grow, and some of the mechanisms used to cope with the problems such fluctuations caused.

Realignment of population to resources

One way of responding to the vagaries of mortality experience was to realign population groups and their access to resources. Mechanisms for such realignment existed at all levels of organization in this society, that is, the community (the village), the lineage and the household. This was a more immediately effective way of responding to such fluctuations than through controlling fertility, given the inherently long time lag involved: for example, replacing working age adults in a decimated household through childbearing takes a generation to achieve its effect.

A brief thumbnail sketch of the study villages’ socio-economic organization will help to understand the context in which these adjustment mechanisms

8. Carl Mosk, personal communication.
9. The discussion in this section draws on Monica Das Gupta, “Fertility decline in Punjab, India: parallels with historical Europe”, Population Studies, 49 (3) (1995), 481-500. The data used in this paper are derived from a field survey and anthropological fieldwork carried out by Das Gupta in 1984-88, of eleven villages in Ludhiana District, Punjab, which were previously studied in the 1950s by John Wyon and John Gordon (John B. Wyon and John E. Gordon, The Khanna Study, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). These data are supplemented with data from secondary source materials and archival records, including genealogies maintained with land records.

As a point of clarification, it should be mentioned that the Khanna Study villages are located in Ludhiana District, one of the districts of the present day Indian State of Punjab. The Punjab Province of the colonial era was partitioned in 1947 between India and Pakistan. The Indian Punjab was further divided in 1966 into the States of Haryana and Punjab. Thus the Indian Census and other official data on “Punjab” refer, depending on the dates, to pre-partition or post-partition Punjab.
worked. The villages are divided broadly into two groups: those who own the land, and those who are landless. In the traditional village economy, the landless derived a living through patron-client relationships with the landowners, whereby they would perform a variety of services for them in exchange for (1) direct payment; (2) rights to free collection of many essentials; and (3) an assurance of help in crises to ensure survival, though at very low levels of living. These service relationships were transferable in ways analogous to land: the landless would pass on their service rights to their sons through a system of partible inheritance.

At the level of the community, the primary adjustment mechanism was that of controlled migration. For example, if it was felt that there was a shortage of landless laborers, the landowners would invite a person or a lineage from another village to settle in their village and take on specified hereditary service relationships. Conversely, if a landless lineage was growing too rapidly, some of its members would seek to migrate to another village.

An analogous process worked at the sublineage level. If a branch of a lineage was dying out, they had two options: (1) to adopt a son, or (2) to bring in a larger group of working age men by asking a daughter’s husband and his male kin to come to settle in the village. There were also more temporary and reversible ways of adjusting access to resources to shifts in demographic fortunes. One was to reallocate land temporarily through sharecropping or simple usufruct arrangements, or reassign service rights in the case of the landless.

These adjustment mechanisms were geared towards coping with fluctuations in population size, in a situation where the overall rate of population growth was very slow and sometimes negative. They could operate only in a situation of alternating spurts of growth and shrinking of numbers, because they were based on reallocating access to resources between groups with differential growth, i.e. between groups who were experiencing different phases of such spurts. When a village, a lineage or a household was going through a phase of declining numbers, these mechanisms would help reallocate resources to those whose cycle was going in the other direction. They were quite inadequate in the situation which began around 1920, of sustained mortality decline and consequently steady and rapid population growth.

In the face of sustained population growth after 1921, a situation was quickly reached in which all groups were growing, and no resources were being opened up for reallocation. These adjustment mechanisms at the community and sublineage level were consequently abandoned. By the early decades of this century, people were no longer invited to settle in the village. This is evident

from the genealogies, which indicate when a family migrated in, from where and under what circumstances. In-migration after this period was rare (as also adoption), and done only for personal reasons without accompanying hereditary rights to land or service relationships.

The redistribution within the lineage of land and service relationships also petered out. In the case of service relationships, not only were they no longer redistributed, but over time they became too meager a source of income to support all the families in these groups. The amount of land available for leasing reduced sharply, and the norm of keeping leasing arrangements within the lineage was largely abandoned.

At the level of the household and the family, there were two basic strategies apart from adoption. One was for families ravaged by mortality to regroup with other kin such as to form a new unit large enough to be viable. The third strategy was to control growth through regulating marriage. Unlike the other mechanisms of adjusting population to resources described above, marriage regulation was not dependent on resources being available to reallocate.

**Marriage regulation**

Marriage was regulated on an *ad hoc* basis, to avoid rapid subdivision of property. When a household’s demographic fortunes were such that many sons survived to reproduce, they frequently resorted to restricting their sons’ marriage, especially if the household already had a small landholding because of earlier subdivision. Marriage was also postponed when times were hard for a household.

Marriage regulation can be seen as partly a result of a perception of current impoverishment, as well as a desire to avoid future impoverishment. The distinction between these two interpretations is extremely fine: they are in a sense two sides of the same coin. Take for example a family with five acres of land and four surviving sons. Five acres of land in this fertile region can be adequate for sustaining a family, but not for sustaining four families in the next generation. When such a family decided to let only one son marry, they were motivated not only by the immediate consideration of curtailing household expenses, but also by the longer-term need to ensure that the next generation would have enough resources for their livelihood.

Those with larger landholdings did not restrict marriage to the same extent as those with smaller holdings. As long as each son would have enough land to sustain a family, land subdivision was not seen as a major concern. This is understandable, because before the sustained mortality decline, it was not uncommon to find a shrinking of numbers in a subsequent generation such that landholdings which had previously subdivided would be re-consolidated by reverting to the closest male kin.

Genealogy 1 shows how marriage was restricted in one sublineage of
landowners, and illustrates some of the above points about how such decisions were made. It is evident that the strategy was resorted to by those branches of the sublineage which were growing most rapidly in terms of surviving sons and consequently experiencing rapid subdivision of land. Vigorously followed, this strategy could counter the effect of rapid growth. For example, the descendants of person A restricted marriage sharply in two consecutive generations, a fact which combined with the normal probability of some marriages being son-less to result in the very likely outcome that A will have only one greatgrandson. Traditionally, this son would have inherited and re-consolidated all his greatgrandfather’s land, or most of the land if an uncle distrusted the others and adopted an heir.\footnote{Today, there is so much more mobility in the employment and land market that people may well cash in the value of their land through sale or mortgage, rather than leaving it to nephews.}

The family was able to achieve this relatively painlessly because they held together strongly as a joint family: all the unmarried men benefited from the shared domestic arrangements of their household. By contrast, the family of person C was more conflict-ridden. The two sons had completely different demographic fortunes, one having five sons grow to adulthood, the other having none. Instead of sharing their fortunes, they chose less optimal outcomes, with person E being forced to restrict his sons’ marriage while his brother F tried desperately to obtain an heir by the unusual and unpopular step of bringing in a son-in-law.

\begin{itemize}
\item married son
\item unmarried son age 40+
\item adopted son-in-law
\item unmarried son age 35-39
\end{itemize}

Numbers indicate landholding units. 5 units = 1 acre
The effort failed, as this couple bore no sons. Differences in circumstances and in interpersonal relations made for differences in how this adjustment mechanism was actually used.

The regulation of marriage was combined with the practice of informal fraternal polyandry. Thus, for example, only one brother might marry, and the other brothers would share conjugal rights in the wife and derive a considerable degree of emotional satisfaction in raising the children together. The children were seen as *de jure* the offspring of the “married” brother, but *de facto* those of all the brothers, and all the brothers’ land would be divided amongst the resulting sons.

A potential contradiction existed between male celibacy and the culturally required universal marriage of women. Female celibacy was not culturally acceptable, as in Europe, or even in Nepal. Yet the females who were born could not all be married if a substantial proportion of potential grooms were kept celibate by their households. This was resolved largely by maintaining an imbalance in the sex ratio through the infanticide and neglect of female babies. It could be argued that removing female children was in fact the only relevant instrument of population control, and that male celibacy is irrelevant. This is not quite the case, for two reasons. Firstly, it was the relevant mechanism at the level of the *household* for adjusting numbers to resources. Secondly, the stock of wives was fine-tuned to the number of men in a position to marry by importing women from other regions.

Although male celibacy and excess female child mortality seem to mesh well in this cultural and demographic regime, they are the result of different decision-making processes. As is illustrated in Genealogy 1, marriage regulation was the result of conscious decisions made by households in order to maintain collective prosperity. Excess female child mortality was the result of more complex forces. Given the fact of exogamy and the time lag between infancy and marriage, excess female child mortality cannot be seen as being deployed as part of the same immediate household strategy as non-marriage. The ways in which numbers of marriageable girls were adjusted to fluctuations in male celibacy needs to be studied, but the available evidence indicates that when there was a

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13. See for example, “Census of Punjab” (1868), *Report on the Census of the Punjab*, (Lahore, 1870). Personal communication with some older women in Bengal indicates that Punjabi wife-seekers would look as far as Bengal for brides. Paul Hershman, *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage* (Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 1981) also mentions that Jats would if necessary marry women from lower castes, which had far lower levels of female infanticide.
shortage of women to marry within the caste group, women would be imported from elsewhere or from lower castes.\textsuperscript{15}  

Marriage regulation and fraternal polyandry were widely documented in the colonial administrative literature from the times of their first settlement in this region, and vestiges of it remain today. For example, the 1901 Census of Punjab\textsuperscript{16} explicitly discusses male celibacy and fraternal polyandry as ways used to prevent the subdivision of property. This is followed up in the 1911 Census of Punjab,\textsuperscript{17} which adds that another of the “artificial methods of keeping down the population” is the practice of female infanticide. That marriage regulation was motivated by a desire to prevent property division was also clearly enunciated by older men in the study villages. (People would in any event prefer not to marry their daughters into households which were resource-poor.) It is interesting to note that marriage restriction was practiced relatively little amongst the landless laborers (table 1), although they were far more resource-poor than the landowners. One reason for this could be that the landowners found it easier to relate their available resources to their numbers, as is discussed below.

\textsuperscript{15} See footnote 11.

\textsuperscript{16} “Census of India 1901”, Punjab, Part I: Report, 223.

\textsuperscript{17} “Census of India 1911”, Punjab, Part I: Report, 65, 260.
Mortality decline and accelerated pressure to control marital fertility

The sustained mortality decline after 1920 is reflected in the genealogies, which show the burgeoning of numbers in the generations born after 1920. As discussed above, most of the traditional homeostatic mechanisms were helpful only as ways of adjusting to fluctuations in numbers. They were clearly inadequate for coping with a situation of steady growth of numbers, and most of them were abandoned during the early decades of this century.

Marriage regulation was the only traditional homeostatic mechanism which remained as an effective response in this new situation. This, too, had its limitations. It was useful as an *ad hoc* mechanism for adjusting to variations in household size before the beginning of the demographic transition, but there were problems in using it as the sole method of countering the steadily growing pressure of population.

Firstly, enormous human burdens are involved in having high and ever-increasing proportions of men remaining permanently unmarried, and women correspondingly removed from growing to marriageable ages. While marriage might be postponed or denied when times were hard, it was one of the foremost consumption priorities when times were good. And indeed with the control of famines and epidemics, and the growth of agricultural productivity, times were good in the twentieth century in a way never before experienced. Clearly a wider range of strategies for fertility control was required.

The effort to control population growth was not only multi-pronged, but intense and carried out at considerable human and social cost. Levels of male celibacy soared despite the costs this entailed. Raising women’s age at marriage entailed a social revolution, as this society places enormous value on premarital chastity, and allowing women to marry later involves considerable risk of loss of honor. Controlling cohabitation and other non-contraceptive methods of restricting marital fertility also involves a major cost to the couple. The advent of modern contraceptives was a boon to these women.18

Marital fertility had always been subject to manipulation. There were many ways in which fertility could be controlled. For example, it was the tradition for women not necessarily to live continuously with their husband for many years after marriage. If they were married very young, they did not visit the husband at all until reaching their late teens. The frequency and duration of subsequent visits was also subject to control. Similarly, after the first and second childbirths the woman might stay with her parents for a protracted period. Within the husbands home, the mother-in-law had considerable power to encourage or pre-


concluded that the early acceptors of modern contraceptive methods probably merely substituted these for the folk methods they were already practicing.
vent women from spending time with their husband. Withdrawal, abortion and terminal abstinence were in common use, along with the possibility of infanticide, to control the number of children born. All these mechanisms could be used to either accelerate the pace of childbearing or decelerate it, depending on the needs and resources of the household.

Mortality decline did not only provide an initial impetus to control fertility. The continued reduction in both infant and adult mortality rates kept up a sustained pressure to maintain the tempo of fertility reduction, by partially offsetting its effectiveness in slowing population growth. Mortality decline was also very important in enabling people to shape their families and households as they thought best. As mortality levels fell, people were removed from the situation in which the vagaries of mortality could remove productive adults from the household, and prevent couples from reaching the number of surviving children they would like to have. Levels of child mortality are now low enough for the majority of women to achieve the family size they want and to terminate childbearing early, while still within their peak reproductive years.

**Social class differentials in the fertility decline**
The difference between social classes in the timing and pace of fertility decline confirms and further elaborates this hypothesis as to how the need to reduce fertility came to be felt and put into practice. The social classes discussed here are the landowners (Jat caste) and the landless laborers (Chamar caste). Between them, they comprised over three-quarters of the total population of the study villages in 1984. The villages contain several other castes with small numbers of people, and an analysis of all these castes would involve much circumstantial detail which is outside the scope of this paper.

In this society, there is a clear differential between the landowners and the landless laborers, in that the landowners had earlier and more rapid fertility decline than the landless. This differential already existed in this area in the 1950s. Graph 1 compares the age-specific marital fertility rates of these two groups in the 1950s and the 1980s, and shows that while both groups had a sharp fertility decline, the landowners retained their position of being ahead in the decline. A comparison of the age-distribution of the landowners and the landless laborers indicates that the landowners initiated fertility decline at least five years before the landless laborers. The pace of the landowners’ fertility decline has also been faster, such that the cohorts born after 1974 have actually been shrinking in size.

It is not surprising to find this differential between the landowners and

19. The overlap of caste and class in pre-industrial village India is discussed in Andre Beteille, *Caste, class and power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).
the landless laborers. Firstly, the landowners benefited earlier than the landless from each effort to improve the security of life and livelihood. Secondly, the landowners had traditionally been the most sensitive to the need to regulate family size to the available land. Their custom of equal inheritance by each son made them vulnerable to rapid subdivision of holdings. The effects of rapid population growth in one generation were therefore very visible to them, in the very concrete terms of the amount of land inherited by each son. It was they who traditionally made more use of male celibacy to control the number of heirs born in the next generation (table 1). Thus a provision for population regulation existed in their “cultural reservoir”, which made it easier for them to respond quickly to the need for increased control of population growth. Studies in other parts of South Asia suggest the existence of similar “cultural reservoirs” elsewhere in the region, especially amongst the landowning groups.20

The landless also had partible inheritance of income sources, in their case the primary income source being their patron-client service relationships. The subdivision of such resources was far less concretely visible than that of land. This perception was further diffused by the fact that the patron-client relationships were premised on the assumption that the patron would provide not only a living but also a generalized insurance to the client. Thus the landless would find it much harder to see a direct relationship between having a large number of heirs and a threat to their future livelihood.

The landowners were, then, the leaders in the fertility decline. The logic of this decline diffused from them to the landless, just as in many other settings fertility decline diffused from the local elite to those below them in the social and economic hierarchy.21 The landless followed after only a short lag. This was probably partly by way of imitating the behavior of the dominant group, which is also the group perceived as the model of success in the community. However, it cannot have been simply a matter of blind imitation, as the landless themselves had

20. Sidney R. Schuler, *The other side of polyandry* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987) and others have written on polyandry and marriage regulation in the Himalayan region as a means of conserving household resources. Even where marriage regulation is not practiced, as amongst the Patels of Gujarat, the intercensal growth rates of landowners are far lower than that of landless (Jan Breman, *Patronage and exploitation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974). The pattern of tighter marriage regulation amongst cultivators than amongst agricultural laborers has also been found in the European context by David I. Kertzer, “Reflections on the European marriage pattern: sharecropping and proletarianization in Casalecchio, Italy, 1861-1921”, *Journal of Family History*, 16 (1) (1991), 31-45.

21 This process of diffusion of changes in fertility behavior down the social hierarchy is discussed in several studies from historical Europe. See, for example J.A. Banks, *Prosperity and parenthood* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), and David I. Kertzer and Dennis P. Hogan, *Family, political economy and demographic change: the transformation of life in Casalecchio, Italy, 1861-1921* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
very good reasons for wanting to reduce their family size. While their perception of population pressure would be more diffuse than that of the landowners, they would nonetheless have felt considerable pressure. This perception was heightened by the fact that one of the ways in which the landowners coped with their own pressure on resources was to gradually abandon their patron-client relationships, leaving the landless with a shrinking income base.

The differential pattern of fertility decline between these socio-economic groups highlights the workings of the factors underlying the onset of the fertility decline in this society discussed above. That is, they emphasize the role of (1) the perceived need for fertility decline, combined with (2) the newly-found security and stability of expectations which made it possible for people to have the confidence to reduce their family size.

Conclusions
The problem with Davis’ and Hajnal’s argument is that they are looking too closely at the couple as the decision-making unit. This is valid for the North European family, but not for the patrilineal joint family of China and North India. They thus overlook the possibility that the household may seek to regulate its reproduction to avoid threats to its continued economic viability. As this paper illustrates with data from North India, joint family households do make joint decisions about fertility: by regulating the marriage of their sons, and influencing the pace of childbearing within marriage.

In these North Indian villages, a substantial proportion of men of the landowning caste never married, and this proportion increased with rising population pressure on resources, from 13% of men unmarried in 1921 to 23% in 1969. Genealogies show that families with several sons surviving to adulthood were most likely to discourage their marrying, especially if they already had a small landholding. A plethora of means was also in place to control marital fertility by regulating the extent of contact between husband and wife, supplemented by withdrawal and abortion. Part of early childhood mortality also constitutes postnatal control of family size, through selective infanticide and neglect of children.

A variety of other mechanisms was also used to regulate the balance between population and resources, including reallocation of access to resources and controlled migration. However, most of these mechanisms hinged around reallocating resources in response to fluctuations in numbers. With steady mortality decline and consequent steady population growth, the scope for reallocating resources ended and these mechanisms had to be abandoned. Thus the sustained mortality decline made it necessary to increase celibacy rates, raise women’s age at marriage and tighten control of marital fertility, before the advent of more convenient modern ways of controlling the growth of family size. Marriage regulation was practiced most by the landowners, as the partible inher-
Itance of land brought the consequences of population growth home to them vividly and concretely. The landless laborer’s perception of population pressure was more diffused because their primary income did not derive from property which subdivided visibly: instead, they depended on the generalized security of patron-client relations for their livelihood. Thus landless laborers had low proportions of men never marrying, and also began fertility decline after the landowners.

This runs counter to Davis’ and Hajnal’s view that societies characterized by the joint family system necessarily exhibit universal early marriage and lack a “nuptiality valve” to help balance household numbers with available resources. There is evidence also from China and Italy that households regulated the marriage of their men such that some married late or never married, especially in poorer families. This pattern emerges clearly from data from Northeastern China for the period 1792-1873. A similar pattern was found in Italy, where Kertzer found that between 1861-1921 as many as 16% of males among sharecropper families never married: men were discouraged from marrying if there were several brothers in the family “since a point could be reached where the number of family members would become too great for the farm to support”. As in North India, marriage rates were higher among agricultural laborers.

The theoretical ramifications of these contrasting family systems can be developed much further, and hypotheses generated for testing. One hypothesis is that in a stem family system such as that of North Europe, parents may have less incentive to control their childbearing than in joint family systems, since excess children can be sent out of the household at young ages. By contrast in joint family systems, the household has much more obligation to its children. The household has the responsibility of managing the long-term viability of the entire unit, and all members born into it have a claim to its resources. Sons have a claim to an inheritance, and daughters have a claim to be raised and have their


marriage payments taken care of. Some confirmation of this hypothesis emerges from Wang and Tsuya’s study of fertility behavior in selected European and East Asian settings, where they find a greater degree of control of marital fertility in East Asia than in Europe. These and other hypotheses need to be tested to dispel myths and understand better how societies have actually sought to regulate their population and resource balance.

Europe and China: Two kinds of patriarchy

Arthur P. Wolf
‘I hope truth is always apparent to me. It makes such a good vantage ground for surveying everything from the right angle.’
Mrs. Christy in Ivy Compton-Burnett, _Men and Wives_

In 1965 John Hajnal struck a line across Europe from Leningrad to Trieste and argued that until recently it was the boundary between two distinctive marriage patterns – a “European pattern” and a “non-European pattern.” The distinctive marks of the European pattern were (1) a high age at marriage and (2) a high proportion of people who never marry. Hajnal recognized that “significant departures from the European pattern may be found not only as one proceeds eastward but on the southern edge of Europe as well.” He also recognized that non-European societies may show “wide variation in the pattern of their marriage rates.” He nonetheless insisted that “all the varieties that exist are separated by a distinct gap from the European.” “Europeans have married much later than others and more of them have remained unmarried throughout life.”

Bold at it is, this is only the weak version of the Hajnal hypothesis. The strong version, adumbrated in Hajnal’s 1965 paper and developed in a second paper published in 1982, contrasts, not just two marriage patterns, but two demographic/kinship regimes. Societies west of what has come to be known as the Hajnal line are characterized by late marriage, frequent celibacy, low fertility, low mortality, one married couple per household, a close link between marriage and entry into household headship, and servanthood as a common stage in the life cycle; those east of the Hajnal line, by early and nearly universal marriage, high fertility, high mortality, complex households containing two or more married couples, a long delay between marriage and household headship, and a tendency for people to employ their children at home rather than to let them out as servants.

What I have called the weak version of the Hajnal hypothesis is one of the most widely accepted propositions in historical demography. Surveyed from viewpoints within Europe – from the regions of extensive agriculture in southern Italy, from the southern end of the Iberian Peninsula, or from the mountains

of northern Greece – European marriage looks too varied to be contrasted with “the rest of the world.” But when one steps back and surveys Europe from a distance – from, say, North India, South China, or rural Russia – it is hard to deny Hajnal’s claim that Europe was “unique or almost unique in the world.” The question is, why? What was it that made Europe unique? Part of my thesis will be that this question has not been answered because the outlook of the authors who have addressed it is too narrowly European. They stand so close to Europe that they cannot see it in the perspective demanded by Hajnal’s global hypothesis. I will therefore start at the other end of the continent and approach Europe from the perspective offered by late traditional China. This is an appropriate perspective because marriage in China presents an extreme example of what Hajnal called “the non-European pattern.”

The dean of British historical demography, E.A. Wrigley, has argued that “the most significant feature of Hajnal’s [1965] article (...) was simply that he placed marriage once again in the center of the stage.” Wrigley says “once again” because marriage was also at the center of the contrast Malthus drew between population dynamics in “the different states of modern Europe” and in “the less civilized parts of the world and in past times.” In the former, the principal check on population growth was “delay of the marriage union”, which, for Malthus, was a form of moral restraint; in the latter, the principal checks were “positive” rather than “prudential”, which is to say that population growth was only checked by the consequences of over-population – poverty, disease, famine, and war.

The modern version of the Malthusian argument is that population growth is governed by what Ronald Lesthaeghe has called “a nuptiality valve”. Fertility is largely controlled by age at marriage and proportions marrying, which are in turn functions of the age at which men can achieve an independent living. As summarized by Albert I. Hermalin and Etienne van de Walle, the model starts with the proposition that “people want to get married. To do so they require a material basis, which includes a place to live and a means of livelihood. It follows logically that they will get married, provided dwellings and jobs are available.” Thus “the extent of nuptiality – and consequently the level of fertility – reflects the availability of a material basis for marriage.”


Dutch villages this material basis included at least three cows. The argument says that when cows were easy to come by, men married early; when cows were hard to acquire, they married late and often not at all.

Wrigley and Schofield have made what they modestly characterize as “a strong case for supposing that the institution of marriage in early modern Europe functioned effectively in matching nuptiality, and so at one remove fertility, to secular changes in economic opportunity.” But while this argument has proven exceptionally fruitful when applied to variation within Europe, it is does not help explain the differences between Europe and China. It is obvious that by the beginning of the late imperial period, the typical Chinese peasant was impoverished and miserably so compared to his European counterpart. Why, then, did all Chinese women marry? Why did they marry eight or nine years earlier than European women? And, why, despite the fragmentation of livelihoods produced by partible inheritance, did Chinese couples strive to produce as many sons as possible? It is not surprising that Malthus found Sir George Staunton’s account of the size of China’s population

so extraordinary as to startle the faith of many readers and tempt them to suppose, either that some accidental error must have crept into the calculations (...) or that the mandarin who gave (...) Staunton the information must have been prompted by a national pride to exaggerate the power and resources of the country.

The population of China had been “forced” and “wretchedness” was the consequence of it, yet the poor “would always marry when the slightest prospect opened to them of being able to support a family.” To his credit Malthus did not suggest that the Chinese were irrational, irresponsible, or immoral, but he could make no sense of their behavior.

The neo-Malthusian solution to the problem has been to attribute early and universal marriage to joint family systems – Hajnal’s strong hypothesis. As he put it in his 1965 paper,


In Europe it has been necessary for a man to defer marriage until he could establish an independent living adequate to support a family; in other societies the young couple could be incorporated in a larger economic unit, such as a joint family. This, presumably, is more easily achieved and does not require such a long postponement of marriage.

But why, we must ask, would the heads of joint families choose to use their resources in this way? Hajnal suggests that it is because in larger units like joint families “extra labor is often felt to be an economic asset.” But can we reasonably suppose that European farmers did not consider extra labor an economic asset? If not, why were servants “a characteristic and (...) substantial part of rural pre-industrial Northwest European households”? Why, in other words, does Hajnal’s strong hypothesis include “the circulation of servants” as an essential component of the European demographic system?

My argument is that the solution to Malthus’s problem is parental authority. In other words, contrary to Wrigley, I believe that Hajnal made a mistake when, following Malthus, he put marriage at the center of the demographic stage. The nuptiality valve may be what governed variation in demographic rates within Europe, but nuptiality is not the key to the differences between Europe and the rest of the world. The centerpiece of the global contrast Hajnal formulated is the extent to which parents have the ability *qua* parents to control the lives of their adult children. Marriage only helps define the difference between Hajnal’s European and non-European patterns. It is only one part – albeit an important part – of the two complexes. The variable that creates the two complexes is the difference between two kinds of parental authority.

Compare the ways in which an English father and a Chinese mother dealt with what each took to be a rebellious son. The English father is the now famous clergyman, Ralph Josselin, who, at the time of the incident described, was vicar of Earls Coln and one the most prosperous men in his community. The Chinese mother is the elderly, nearly blind, widow of a fisherman living near the old Dutch fort at An-p’ing in Southern Taiwan. The incident involving her comes from an account by William Pickering who was then commissioner of customs at An-p’ing and lived in the customs house across the street. He recorded the incident as an example of “what filial obedience, according to the rules of Confucius, means amongst the Chinese.”

The Josselin incident took place in his home a few days before Christmas in 1673. Josselin’s diaries for the preceding three years give evidence of a grow-

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ing dissatisfaction with the behavior of his second son, John. Josselin complains that “John robd his mother and sister of neare 30s”, that he “carried some things with him without taking leave of mee”, and, more generally, that he is disobedient and given to debauchery. Again and again Josselin lectures John on his duty to obey his father as God’s mediator, but the boy continues to behave in ways that Josselin finds “grievous to me.” Finally, Josselin can stand no more and confronts John in a family discussion held “before his mother and foure sisters.” What he tells John is that he will settle all his estate on him if reforms but that if he does not, he will get no more than bare subsistence. In Josselin’s own words,

John set your selfe to feare God, & bee industrious in my business, refrain your evill course, and I will passe by all past offences, setle all my estate on you after your mother’s death, and leave you some stocke on the ground and within doores to the value of £ 100 and desire of you, out of your marriage portion but £ 400 to provide for my daughters or otherwise to charge my land with so much for their portions; but if you continue your ill course I shall dispose of my land otherwise, and make only a provision for your life to put bread in your hand.

John was moved by this offer and “ownd his debauchery”, but his chastened state lasted only a month. Later Josselin claims that “John for his disobedience was declared no son”, but in fact he allowed the bulk of his estate to pass to his errant offspring.

The An-p’ing incident began with a five-year-old boy’s refusing to put on his trousers. Irritated, his mother slapped him on the head; he cried; and this aroused his grandmother, who “took her pipe, and beat her daughter-in-law about the head until the blood streamed down her face.” Pickering, who was visiting the boy’s father, urged him to intervene, which he reluctantly did by stepping between his mother and his wife.

But the old women, [being] nearly blind, and having very small feet, tripped over a stool and fell to the ground. She then immediately set up the most awful howl, which could be heard all over the neighborhood, calling out that her son was unfilial and had beaten her, so must be taken to the mandarin for punishment.

Neighbors seized the son and dragged him to the yamen where his mother, accompanied by a sympathetic crowd, fell on her knees before the official, “cry-

ing loudly for justice, while her friends echoed her demands.” Again Pickering intervened by explaining the circumstances of the case, the result being that “the official contented himself with giving (...) a long oration upon the necessity of obeying one’s parents, whether of the family or the state.”

We see in these two incidents concrete examples of the difference between what I will call “property patriarchy” and “state patriarchy.” Josselin was a well-to-do, well-established man who enjoyed the patronage of local gentry, but he lacked an effective means of enforcing his son’s obedience. The best he could do was a weak combination of bribes and threats involving property. The Chinese mother was old and poor as well as nearly blind, but she was fully capable of exacting obedience from her son. The difference was that she had the backing of the Chinese state. Hill Gates makes the essential point when she notes that in China parents used both the threat and reality of the law to control their rebellious children. Under Chi’ing law, when parents or grandparents requested a magistrate to punish their junior’s defiance, ‘the authorities, without investigation and acting solely on the parents’ complaint’, could pronounce a sentence of banishment, revokable if the parents withdrew the complaint.

I do not mean to say that all European fathers were as incapable of controlling their children as Ralph Josselin. My point is only that seen from the Chinese end of the continent, the European patriarch did not stand very tall. He was not possessed of patria potestas of the kind that Gaius had in mind in his famous treatment of the subject. Instead of demanding obedience in the name of parenthood, the European patriarch gave gifts or threatened disinherance. Poor men had little hope of controlling their adult children, and wealthy men could only control those they favored. The gifts promised to one son to secure his compliance were certain to anger the others and ensure their alienation. Many European fathers must have envied their Chinese counterparts when they learned from John Henry Gray that Chinese parents could “cast their disobedient children into a public prison. Prisoners of this class [were] commonly bound in

chains to large stones, and exposed daily, together with other offenders, at the principal gates of the prison.”

As Protestant reformers and the heads of the newly emerging European states gradually wrested power away from the Catholic Church, the power of European parents grew appreciably. Secret marriages lost their once secure place in canon law after the Council of Trent, and by the middle of the 18th century several states had made parental consent a condition of marriage. But the most that European parents got from the state was the right to approve or disapprove their children’s marital choices. They were never given the right to arrange their children’s marriage without their consent. The European view was that children should conform to their parents’ preferences, but parents should not compel their children into unwanted matches. Thus the title of Luther’s treatise on marriage is That Parents Should Neither Compel Nor Hinder the Marriage of their Children and Children Should Not Become Engaged without the Consent of Their Parents.

The interplay between passion and property that provides most 18th and 19th century novels with their plots is not mere invention. It is well-documented in wills, marriage contracts, and court records from as early as the 16th century. They all say that insofar as European parents were able to control the course of their children’s lives, they were able to do so because they controlled property. Romantic though he was, Rousseau recognized this reality. “The goods of the father, of which he is really the master”, he wrote, “are the ties which keep his children in dependence, and he may bestow on them, if he pleases, no share of this property, unless they merit it by constant deference to his will.” A vivid example is provided by Elizabeth Gaskell’s portrayal of the relationship between a widow and her son, an only child twenty-three years of age.

He was already in possession of the comparatively small property he inherited from his father. The estate on which his mother lived was her own; and her income gave her the means of indulging or controlling him, after he had grown to man’s estate, as her wayward disposition and her love of power prompted her (...) The submission of his will to hers was sure to be liberally rewarded; for it gave her great happiness to extort, from his indifference or his affection, the concessions which she never sought by force of reason, or by appeals to principle.


It is not surprising that in Europe poor parents who tried to arrange their children’s marriages usually failed. They lacked the leverage provided by property. What is surprising is that while the rich were more often successful in match making than the poor, they too often had to be content with letting their children do as they wished. Joel Rosenthal tells us that the when it came to arranging the marriages they had chosen for their heirs, the success of the autocrats of the great Paston family “was really quite limited and unspectacular.” And Steven Ozment notes that between 1525 and 1531 the court in Züürich heard ninety parental challenges to secret marriages. That they knew how to take a case to court and could afford the expense says these were well-established people, but they had still failed to prevent their children from marrying against their wishes.

The contrast with China is evident in every aspect of family life. It was not until the 1930s in Taiwan and the 1950s in China that young people gained any say whatsoever in the matter of their own marriage. Before that these decisions were entirely a matter of parental discretion. “Under the law of T’ang, Sung, Ming, and Ch’ing, a man, even though he was an adult, held an official position, ran a business far from home, did not have the right to marry without his parents’ consent.” An engagement undertaken without their consent was void, and the punishment for persisting was 80 to 100 blows of the heavy bamboo. The property rights of the bride and groom were not a part of marriage negotiations in China because parents did not need to use property to protect their interests. Their interests were guaranteed by the state.

That parental authority flowed from very different sources in Europe and China is also evident in the conditions supporting family complexity in the two regions. European scholars appear to regard as nearly self-evident the view that family complexity is strongly influenced by property rights. One widely accepted generalization is that partible inheritance favors nuclear families, and impartible inheritance, complex families. The reason given is that the ability to hold an estate intact gave parents a means of manipulating their children and of controlling at least one of them until they were ready to retire. The fact that in many areas the children excluded from the estate were entitled to compensation is held to be less important than the fact that they could not demand a share of the estate when they came of age.

The difference between this and the situation in China is obvious in the fact that while complex families were far more numerous than in Europe, partible inheritance was the rule everywhere.\textsuperscript{31} It is true that the families of the wealthy were larger and more complex than those of the poor, but this was not because their property made the wealthy better able to control their adult children. It was, in the first place, because the wealthy married earlier, bore more children, and lived longer, and, in the second, because the wealthy had better access to the state and were better at mobilizing its authority. That wealth was not a condition of complex families in China is evident in the size and complexity of the families living in nine villages and two small towns in northern Taiwan. Fifty percent of these families were landless and 26.1 percent owned only small garden plots. Yet the probability of an elementary family’s developing into a stem family was .696, and the probability of a stem family’s developing into what Maurice Freedman called a grand family was .557.\textsuperscript{32} By age forty, 89.7 percent of all men had passed some part of their life in a grand family.\textsuperscript{33}

The Taiwan evidence says that under favorable demographic conditions even poor Chinese families were complex, but favorable demographic conditions were not an indispensable condition of family complexity in China. The indispensable condition was enforcement of the authority granted parents by the state. James Lee and Cameron Campbell have shown that despite poverty, low fertility, and high mortality, the families of Chinese bannermen living in Manchuria were even larger and more complex that those of ordinary farmers living in Taiwan. Grand families accounted for 34.5 percent of all the families recorded in Manchuria as against 26.7 percent of those recorded in Taiwan.\textsuperscript{34} The reason bannermen families were so complex despite an unfavorable economic and demographic milieu is because “the organization of labor under the banner system reinforced familial hierarchy.” The heads of banner families were agents of the state and therefore able to take full advantage of the law that a Chinese son could not separate from his parents against their wishes.\textsuperscript{35}

The fact that wealthy Chinese families were, on average, more complex than poor ones has led many foreign observers to assume that Chinese patri-
archy, like European patriarchy, was founded on property. It is therefore impor-
tant to make one more point concerning the relationship between property and
parental authority, which is that Chinese parents did not have the legal right to
disinherit a son or even to favor one son over another. A man might eject a son
from the household, sell him, or kill him for cause, but he could not disinherit
him.” A man could use property he acquired through his own efforts to dower
a daughter or favor a son, but the property he acquired through inheritance had
to be divided equally between his sons. The reason the Chinese state enforced
partible inheritance was the same as the reason it enforced parental authority. It
was one of the ways the people who controlled the society maintained their con-
trol. The accumulation of large properties through marriage and inheritance
worried the heads of all traditional agrarian societies. What suited them best was
“an empire of small, predictable, kin-based owner-operator production units.”

My alternative to the neo-Malthusian account of the differences between
Europe and China begins with the assumption that people want to control
their offspring as long and as completely as possible. To do so they require a
means of imposing their will, which includes the right to command and the
means of enforcing that right. It follows that people will control their offspring,
provided only that they have the means of doing so. Thus how young people
marry, when they marry, and where they reside after marriage will reflect the
extent to which their society empowers parents. When I say that parents want
to control their children I am not suggesting that their only motive is love of
power. My assumption is that people want to control their offspring because
they want to control their labor and the resources their labor produces.

The reason Malthus found China so perplexing was because he began
with the assumption that young people decided when and how they were to mar-
ry. “The poor”, he suggested, “would undoubtedly be deterred from entering into
[the married] state, under the certainty of being obliged to expose their children,
or sell themselves and families as slaves.” Malthus could not imagine the possi-
bility that a bride and groom would have taken no part in the decisions leading to
their marriage. Consequently, he could not see that what forced the Chinese pop-
ulation into wretchedness was parental authority and ultimately the state that
sponsored that authority. The patriarchs who governed the families of China
married their sons and daughters as early as possible regardless of the conse-

36. See David Wakefield, Fenjia.
37. Hill Gates, China’s Motor, 92.
38. Sung Lung-shen, “Property and division”, in: Emily Ahern and Hill Gates (eds), The Anthropology of Tai-
quences because they viewed their offspring as resources to be deployed for their benefit. Westerners usually miss what is meant when Chinese people tell them that “in China people do not ask how much money you have. They ask how many sons and grandsons you have.” What is meant is that in China sons and grandsons are like money and have the same uses.

Malthus and his intellectual heirs are obviously right in arguing that in Europe marriage was often delayed by the need to accumulate the means of supporting a family. What they have failed to see is that this was because Europeans lacked the means of controlling their adult children. They therefore let them find their own way in the world and hired other people’s children to do the work that in China would have been done by their own children. European states did not enforce filial piety, but they did enforce contracts. The result was that Europeans were not motivated to produce their own household labor force. The success of their enterprises and their security in old age largely depended on having the means to hire labor. When asked why they commonly gave their daughters away shortly after birth, Chinese parents say that it is because “daughters are useless things. They will only grow up and marry out of the family anyway.” In Europe all children were daughters. They were all useless things because their parents could not control them as adults.

Hajnal goes too far when he lumps together as “non-European” social and economic systems as divergent as the Ache and the Assyrian and the Kung! and the Korean. It is true that in all these societies people all married and at an early age, but it was for very different reasons and with very different results. I will therefore limit the scope of Hajnal’s hypothesis to societies with advanced agriculture. These are roughly the same societies that Jack Goody classifies together as possessed of “plough agriculture” as against “hoe agriculture.” He shows that they are mostly societies with an elaborate division of labor, a high degree of social stratification, and a centralized political system.41

I believe that Hajnal also goes wrong when he posits a simple duality of marriage and family types – European vs. non-European. His argument loses some of its dramatic appeal but achieves greater plausibility if one thinks of his variables as defining a Guttman scale with Northern Europe and China as the two extreme scalar types.42 The Northern Italians with late marriage but complex households and the Southern Italians with early marriage but little celibacy may be intermediate scalar types rather than exceptional cases.43 This would be the case if the manifest relationship between the components of Hajnal’s contrast can be accounted for by the existence of a latent class.44

What might be called the cautious version of my interpretation of Hajnal is that where societies fall among the scalar types defined by his variables is largely determined by the degree to which parents were able to direct the lives of their adult children. Where parents possessed this ability – as they did in Imperial Russia, North India, and the Later Roman Empire – the society belonged to the Chinese scalar type; where parents lacked this ability – as in England, Northern France, and most of Scandinavia – the society belonged to the Northern Europe scalar type. The bold version of my revised hypothesis goes beyond this by relating the strength of parental authority to its source. I argue that parental authority was weak and limited to a privileged few where it depended on manipulation of property, but strong and available to the everyone where it was defined as an aspect of parenthood and sponsored by the state.

I characterize the second version of my interpretation as “bold” because it moves the argument from the realm of marriage and the family to the realm of political economy. It suggests that the variables defined by Hanjal tend to cohere because they are aspects of two societal types. What these are is suggested by Steven Hoch’s provocative analysis of patriarchy on a 19th-century Russian estate. Under the system developed by serfdom a patriarchal head of household sought to better his status, not by competing with other households, but by “exploiting more effectively the members of his own household.” His status in the community largely depended on his ability “to maintain advantage over other household members.” This he did by colluding with the bailiff whose job was to extract income for the landlord.

What emerged was a ruling stratum of peasants in which membership was primarily a function of age. This ruling elite, the heads of households, shared with the estate management a number of concerns, and together they functioned in a social system that advanced and protected their common interests. In upholding the large patriarchal family either by directly controlling household fission or by granting village elders the right to regulate household size, the bailiffs supported the very foundation of patriar-


chal authority. And this authority assured the estate of a strong ally in the battle to get the remainder of the serf population to work productively and behave properly.46

What we see here is a raw version of what Samir Amin and Eric Wolf call a “tributary mode of production.” This is, in Wolf’s words, a society in which “the primary producer (...) is allowed access to the means of production while tribute is extracted from him by political or military means.”47 It seems always to involve an implicit bargain under which parents are allowed to exploit their children in return for allowing the state to exploit them. The Chinese version is more sophisticated than the Russian but is essentially the same thing. The state turned parents into quasi-bureaucrats whose function it was to govern their household and pay tribute to the state. Parents received in return the right to deploy their children as they saw fit. They could be developed for use in old age or they could be disposed of at birth. What happened to a particular child largely depended on whether or not his parents had other children and of what age and sex. Table 1 shows that in Taiwan a girl’s probability of being given away as a child was largely a function of the size of the sibling set into which she was born. Girls born to childless parents were likely to be raised by their parents, but girls born to parents with three or more children were almost certain to be given away. The decision parents took were not unlike those taken by a stock broker in that they were eminently rational. What they did with any one resource depended on what other resources they possessed.

Hill Gates has shown many of the most characteristic features of Chinese society are attributable to a system of private, household production.48 This petty capitalist system created in China alternatives that did not exist in other tributary states, but it was not an independent, self-sufficient system. It depended for its very existence on the patriarchy sponsored by the dominant tributary mode of production. The men who managed China’s household enterprises “only hired outsiders to make up for family labor deficits”. For the most part they depended on their authority as households heads to exploit the labor of their wives, sons, and daughters. The system was one in which “the boundary between kinsperson and hired hand is often blurred.”49 Junior kinsmen were treated like hired hands to take full advantage of their labor, and hired hands were treated like junior kinsmen to bring them under patriarchal authority.

The tributary system is found in fully developed form only in old agrarian

empires, but before the advent of market capitalism it was an implicit tendency of all states. The emergence of what European historians call the “absolutist state” was everywhere accompanied by what from a Chinese perspective might be called a Confucianization of society. From the sixteenth century onwards Europe saw “a steady increase in the authority of parents and their powers of coercion of their children”, which Jean-Louis Flandarin attributes to “the interest of the absolute monarchy in supporting the authority of fathers and families.”

A striking example is found in Herman Rebel’s account of the bureaucratization of property and family relations under early Habsburg absolutism. In the 16th century the landlords’ desire to profit from new economic opportunities and the state’s desire to extract more taxes resulted in a state-imposed rationalization of the manorial system. The chief instrument of this was

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Table 1 Probability of Adoption Among Girls Born 1906-35 by Number of Siblings Present at Birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>Number of siblings at birth</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of girls born</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1910</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1915</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1920</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1925</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1930</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>342</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1935</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>410</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability of adoption</th>
<th>Year of birth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906-1910</td>
<td>.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1915</td>
<td>.399</td>
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<tr>
<td>1916-1920</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921-1925</td>
<td>.173</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926-1930</td>
<td>.199</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931-1935</td>
<td>.080</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

emphyteutic tenure, which gave landlords the right to evict tenants who did not maintain the value of their holdings. Under this system the heads of the famous Austrian stem families assumed roles that were at once entrepreneurial and managerial. They became “links in a chain of authority from ruler, through landlords, into households that became increasingly rationalized and bureaucratized.” Rebel writes:

The negative sanctions that threatened a tenant’s social relations ensured that authority-related roles received primary attention and that familial roles became secondary. The situation was, in its undisguised form, nearly intolerable. By 1600, Austrian rural society had already begun to advance (...) toward a destruction of affective human relations in the family and toward an instrumental rationality that subordinated these relations to its own purposes. Everyone, both the masters of the houses as well as the dispossessed [members], suffered under this invasion of family relations by the state.

Why Europe started its movement toward a tributary mode of production so late and moved so slowly is, in my view, the central question in European family history. It is the reason Europe failed to develop state patriarchy of the kind found in other societies with advanced agriculture and thus the reason for Europe’s “unique or almost unique” marriage pattern. The answer is undoubtedly related to the first of what S.E. Finer calls “the two great” inventions of medieval Europe.

The first is the hierarchically organized church which both opposes and symbioses with the secular power, jealously staking out a sphere of authority into which it would not let the rulers enter. In no other part of the world was the substantive delimitation of autocracy institutionalized as it was here. There is nothing to compare with it in Islam, in the Confucian persuasion, or the Buddhist sangha. Nowhere else was the religious institution so powerfully and ably organized.

Jack Goody has shown that one of the spheres of authority staked out by the Church was marriage. This was achieved by insisting that marriage was a sacrament, which the partners administered to themselves by the exchange of consent. Because this gave the Church control of marriage gifts and inheritance, it was, in Goody’s words, “intrinsic to the whole process by which the Church

established its position as a power in the land.”54 The strategy distinguished Europe from the rest of the world because it required the Church’s taking a strong stand against the power of parents. It inserted between parent and child an authority that was not beholden to the state and thereby precluded a Confucian style bureaucratization of family relationships. It was, in my view, what created the European marriage pattern.

In the concluding paragraphs of his 1965 paper Hajnal asks: “Was Malthus right in thinking that late marriage in Europe resulted in lower birth rates, and hence lower death rates, than obtained among non-European populations?”55 His answer is an unequivocal “yes.” In Europe, he argues, crude birth and death rates “rarely” exceeded 38, while those found elsewhere were “always over 40 and often over 45.”56 The result was that European conditions were

fundamentally different not only in marriage, birth and death rates, but above all in standard of living, from those obtaining elsewhere in the world. Europeans, a large proportion of them, not just the rich, had better housing, better clothing, a greater variety of food, more furniture and utensils, than people elsewhere.57

What we have, then, in Hajnal’s essay is not just a contrast between two marriage patterns, not even just a contrast between two demographic regimes, but a contrast between two modes of existence. On the one hand, there is Europe where people marry late, live long, and enjoy a comfortable existence; on the other, there is the rest of the world, where people marry young, die young, and enjoy very few comforts. I think Hajnal’s European/non-European patterns should be treated as extreme scalar types, but I am convinced that the variables he defines cohere in the way he suggests. The problem from my Chinese perspective is why they cohere. It is easy to see how early and universal marriage lead to high fertility, and it is easy to see how high fertility might lead to poverty and high death rates. The problem is why poor people anywhere would all marry and marry at the earliest possible age. Like Malthus before him and Wrigley after him, Hajnal argues that in Europe the poor delayed marriage. But why did the poor in China not do the same? Why, if short-term poverty delayed marriage in Europe, thereby saving Europe from long-term impoverishment, didn’t short-term poverty have the same effect in China? Why, in other words, did the Chinese allow themselves to fall into the Malthusian trap?

The answer offered by James Lee, Wang Feng, Cameron Campbell, and Zhao Zhongwei is that they didn’t. In their revisionist view the Chinese did not need to regulate marriage because they regulated fertility within marriage. Wang, Lee, and Campbell claim that “Qing nobles reduced their fertility through a combination of late starting, early stopping (...) and long spacing”;\(^{58}\) Lee and Campbell claim that the fertility rates of Chinese bannermen in Manchuria were “so low that they are almost inconceivable without assuming widespread sexual restraint and/or the technology of family limitation”;\(^{59}\) and Zhao Zhongwei argues that in China “spacing and stopping behavior was not only related to physiological factors, social norms, and custom, but was also clearly affected by people’s intentional control of their reproduction”\(^{60}\).

I reject the revisionist’s argument for three reasons.\(^{61}\) In the first place, they fail to explain why the Chinese chose to regulate marital fertility rather than marriage. In the second place, they ignore the fact that as compared with Europeans, Chinese peasants were impoverished and miserably so. And in the third place, what they call “late starting, early stopping, and wide spacing” do not stand as evidence of birth control. They are only evidence of the extreme poverty found in China because of the absence of birth control. The reason Chinese women did not bear their first child until two or three years after marriage was not because they deliberately delayed childbearing. It was because of late menarche and a long period of adolescent sterility occasioned by chronic malnutrition. The reason they bore their last child two or three years earlier than European women was not because they deliberately stopped. It was because the poverty they endured made aging Chinese less healthy and less vigorous than aging Europeans.\(^{62}\) And the reason Chinese spaced their children farther apart than Europeans was not because they wanted to limit their fertility. To the contrary, it was because they wanted to maximize the number of children raised, which under the conditions they endured required breast feeding them for at least two years. In China birth spacing was not a form of fertility control; it was a form of mortality control.

\(^{58}\) Lee and Campbell, *Fate and Fortune*, 400.


\(^{62}\) It should also be noted that by age 35 most Chinese couples had been married almost twice as long as Europeans of the same age. This is relevant because William James has shown that “coital rates are much more closely related to duration of marriage than to age.” See William H. James, “The case of the decline in fecundability with age”, *Social Biology*, vol. 26, no. 4 (1979), 330-34.
My view of Chinese population dynamics is essentially the same as that advocated by Steven Harrell.

In periods of economic prosperity and political peace, mortality went down for both sexes at all ages, age at marriage for males went down, and the proportion of married males went up. Conversely, in periods of turmoil, age-specific mortality went up for both sexes, male age at marriage increased, and the proportion of married males declined.

But through these ups and downs “female age at marriage remained fairly constant” and so did age-specific marital fertility. Harrell is right to point out that we need to know more about why males did not marry in hard times, but I see no evidence of its being because some females did not marry. The reason was almost certainly because fewer females survived to marriageable age in hard times than in good times. Everything I know about China argues that its pro-natalist bent was so strong that all women of reproductive age were married in fact if not always in law.

Thus I take my stand with Malthus and the neo-Malthusians in arguing that in China a strong pro-natalist bent forced more population on the landscape than it could bear. What I add is that this pro-natalist bent was the product of an extreme form of patriarchy that had its source in the requirements of a tributary mode of production. Chinese parents could control their adult sons and grandsons and therefore wanted as many as possible. I accept R.H. Tawney’s vivid characterization of China as a country in which “population, instead of being checked by the gradual tightening of economic pressures on individuals, plunges blindly forward, till whole communities go over the precipice.” But I reject his claim that the reason “prudential restraint acted with less force [in China] than elsewhere” was “sentiment, hallowed by tradition” or “the communism of the patriarchal family.” It was the exploitive strategies of the state and the exploitive strategies of parents empowered by the state.

The way I insert patriarchy into Hajnal’s extension of the Malthusian argument can be summarized in the form of two simple diagrams. Diagram A (in figure 1) models the relationships between Hajnal’s major variables under property patriarchy of the kind found in Northwestern Europe; diagram B (also in figure 1) models the relationships between these variables under state patriarchy of the kind found in China.

Human lives everywhere, at all times, are, in the words of John Donne, “exposed to the disposition of the tyde, to the rage of the winde, to the wantoness

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of the eddy, and to innumerable contingencies.” In most societies today, and in Europe since at least the end of the medieval period, the two great contingencies were sex and social class. How long a person lived, whether or not he married, how many children he bore, how comfortably he lived, and how much respect he received from his fellows, largely depended on whether he was born male or female and whether his parents were rich or poor. But the argument presented above suggests that this was not so in societies of the type exemplified by the Russian and Chinese empires. In these societies state-sponsored parental authority created a third, equally fateful contingency – sibling position. In deciding whether or not a child should be allowed to live, how he was to marry, and what occupation he was to follow, Chinese and Russian parents had only to consult their own best interests. The result was that what happened to any particular child depended to a considerable extent on the options created for his parents by the sex and age of his brothers and sisters.

Until the early 1930s more than half of all the female children born in North Taiwan were given away as infants or small children to be raised by their future husband’s family. Whether or not a girl was given out in this fashion decided not only where she was raised and how she would marry but also her chances of surviving childhood. The mortality rates of adopted daughters during

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65. See Richard A. Easterlin, *Birth and Fortune: The Impact of Numbers on Personal Welfare* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980) for a persuasive example of how “forces beyond the control of the individual (...) play a role in determining one’s life.”
the first four years following adoption were almost double those of girls reared at home. Thus the data we have already examined (in table 1) say that in Taiwan the course of a woman's life was largely determined by the size of the sibling set into which she was born. Girls born into families with two or more children were three to four times as likely to be given away as girls born into childless families.

Boys were far less likely to be given away than girls, but their chance of suffering this fate also depended on the composition of the sibling set into which they were born. Table 2 shows that boys with two or more older brothers were ten times as likely to be given away or sold than boys with no older brothers. More important in the case of boys was the sex of their mother's next child. Table 3 shows that whether or not a boy was matched with a girl raised to be his wife largely depended on the sex of his mother's next child. Boys succeeded by a girl were four times as likely to be so matched as boys succeeded by another boy. I have shown elsewhere that marriage with a housemate lowered fertility by nearly forty percent, increased risk of divorce nearly fourfold, and almost trebled the likelihood of the wife's taking a lover. Thus the data in table 3 say that a man's reproductive success, his chances of experiencing divorce, and the probability of his being cuckolded all depended on whether his mother's next child was a boy or a girl.

Herman Rebel is quoted above as saying that by 1600 invasion by the state had created within the Austrian family a dispossessed, exploited class. This happened in China a thousand years earlier and did not end until three hundred years later. Table 4 shows that it gave Chinese parents the ability to completely control the lives of their adult as well as their sub-adult children. The data displayed there say that in Northern Taiwan the age at which a woman married, how she married, and whether or not she bore a child before marriage all depended on whether, at age fifteen, she had older brothers, younger brothers only, or no brothers at all. The most striking fact is that only 6.6 percent of women who had at least one older brother bore a child before marriage as compared with 18.6 percent of those who had only younger brothers and 39.1 percent of those who had no brothers. Obviously, there is no reason to think that women without brothers were more promiscuously inclined than women with brothers. The reason brotherless women were more likely to bear a child before marriage was because, having no sons, their parents used their daughters as substitutes for sons, which meant sending them to work as prostitutes.

Illegitimacy and prostitution were at least as common in Europe as in China, and both have been studied extensively. But so far there is no evidence that a European woman's sibling position biased her sexual career in these


67. See Wolf, *Sexual Attraction and Childhood Association*, Chapters 5-7, p. 78-134.
directions. Indeed, the evidence appears to say that in Europe sibling position only influenced the course of people’s lives through the medium of inheritance customs. Attempts to find other lines of influence have failed. Richard Wall began a recent study of four English parishes thinking that “there might be important differences in residence, occupational, and marriage histories of children born at different points in the family’s life cycle”, but found “only slight evidence of such differences.”68 E.A. Wrigley and his Cambridge colleagues made a determined effort to discover whether or not age at marriage was affected by birth parity in pre-industrial England. They found that “neither the number of siblings of the same sex within a family, nor the rank of individuals within the sibling set appears to have had a significant influence on the timing of marriage.” Examination of sibling sets of a given size revealed no

Table 2 Probability of Adoption Among Boys Born 1906-35 by Number of Brothers Present at Birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>Number of siblings at birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of boys born</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1910</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1915</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1920</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1925</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1930</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1935</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability of adoption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1910</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1915</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1920</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1925</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1930</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1935</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


tendency “for those born early or late within the family to differ from others in marriage age.”

In sum, my argument is that in China, where strong patriarchy gave parents the ability to treat their children as resources, they exercised that authority in their own best interests. The decisions they made as to how best to deploy a particular child depended on what resources they had to hand – how many children and of what age and sex. Under these conditions the composition of a person’s sibling set predicted his life course. In Europe, where patriarchy was weak and entirely dependent on the control of property, sibling position was a weak variable compared with sex and social class. It mattered more among the rich than among the poor and more under some forms of inheritance than under

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**Table 3 Percent of Male Children Matched with Sim-pua by Sex and Fate of their Mother’s Next-born Child**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>Next child a female</th>
<th>Next child a male who died before age 2</th>
<th>Next child a male who survived to age 2</th>
<th>No other child born within 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906-1910</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1915</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1920</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1925</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1930</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1935</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Percent matched with sim-pua**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>Number of boys</th>
<th>Percent matched with sim-pua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906-1910</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1915</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1920</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1925</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1930</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-1935</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Table 4 Percent of Women Who Bore Children Before Marriage, Married Uxorilocally, or Remained Unmarried at Age Thirty by Composition of Sibling Set at Age Fifteen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of sibling set at age fifteen</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Percent bearing children before marriage</th>
<th>Percent marrying uxorilocally</th>
<th>Percent Unmarried at age thirty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daughters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No brothers</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger brothers only</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one older brother</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted daughters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No brothers</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger brothers only</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one older brother</td>
<td>1,007</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


others, but it nowhere achieved the force of fate as it did in China. In Europe one’s fate was largely in the hands of the impersonal forces of the marriage market and the labor market. In China it was in the hands of one’s parents.
An adult life before marriage: Children and the Hajnal hypothesis

Paul M.M. Klep
1. Introduction
What would be the advantage of taking adult children as a theme and approach in this volume about Hajnal’s hypothesis? Since everyone can be considered a child of parents, this perspective may seem not to be really helpful to restrict the scope of a contribution about Hajnal’s European marriage pattern. Nevertheless, if we look at the constraints and choices of the adult children, from their own perspective, Hajnal’s description of distinctive nuptiality of Asian and European “populations” might be rewritten in a certain critical sense. In this contribution I will try to qualify and to specify the working of Hajnal’s famous European “independent livelihood constraint” on the ages at marriage. I suggest incorporating more fully two elements of particular interest in the world of adult unmarried children: the parental constraint on marriage, and the expected burden after marriage.¹

As Hajnal wrote in his first article, we find still about 1900 a Western European pattern of marriage habits that is quite different from the situation in Eastern Europe as well as in Asia. He explains that in the European context of neolocality a marriage implies that children have to start a new household. Therefore, they need time to prepare this operation by acquiring a farm or an equivalent social position.

(...) More simply, men marry late because they cannot “afford” to marry young; they have to wait until they have a livelihood, a farmer till he acquires land, an apprentice till he finishes his apprenticeship and so on. It is tempting to see in this feature a key to the uniqueness of the European marriage pattern. In Europe it has been necessary for a man to defer marriage until he could establish an independent livelihood adequate to support a family; in other societies the young couple could be incorporated in a larger economic unit, such as a joint family. This, presumably, is more easily achieved and does not require such a long postponement of marriage. This line of argument seems especially convincing if the larger economic unit is such that extra labor is often felt to be an economic asset. A system of large estates with large households as in Eastern Europe might thus be conducive to a non-European marriage pattern, while small holdings occupied by a single family and passed on to a single heir would result in a European pattern.²

The expressions “afford”, “have to wait”, and “postponement” show to us how in the view of Hajnal young adults desperately want to marry. They have a problem: the economic constraint to reach the target of an independent livelihood. This forces them to accumulate money or to inherit, and if they fail, to be celibate per-

¹ The author gratefully thanks the participants of the Conference on Marriage and Family in Eurasia (Stanford University), the members of the Workshop Arbeid in Transformatie (University of Nijmegen), as well as Ulrich Pfister (Münster) and Laurence Fontaine (European University Institute Florence) for their helpful comments.
manently. Given the conditions of neolocality, it was this economic scarcity problem that caused a high age at marriage and a high proportion of people who never married at all. In his second article Hajnal shows an important way how adolescent and adult children dealt with this problem: they often entered a labor system of circulating, unmarried servanthood in which they functioned for many years. Therefore, his livelihood constraint combines economic scarcity of land (or position) with servanthood.

Hajnal was not clear about the exact working of an independent livelihood rule on ages at marriage. Not the death rate, but maybe “arrangements” between parents and children could be crucial. Although the principle was clear (a rule of an independent livelihood), and the explaining factor had been found (the need to get land), he had no theory to explain the variety of ages so as observed in historical reality, especially not for women.  

Looking at the Hajnal’s own data concerning low nuptiality in Western Europe around 1900 (see for a selection: table 1), one would wonder whether scarcity of land and problems with employment opportunities could be that important. The least agricultural countries are firmly in the middle of European nuptiality, whereas the strongest agricultural countries are at the top as well as at the bottom of it.

Some authors criticized the Malthusian, and the economic deterministic character of the basic explanatory framework of Hajnal. Is the (un)balance between population and economic resources crucial to explain low nuptiality? Should other, social, political or cultural factors be included? In his introduction to a collection of papers dealing with Hajnal in the nineteenth century, George Alter points at findings where the Malthusian constraints do not seem to apply. The persistence of late marriage in nineteenth-century Europe “is a challenge to the Hajnal thesis”. Some authors in his collection suggested incorporating other factors, including culture. Can we explain Western European variations in age at marriage by different sets of economic opportunities – and related social norms – that determine how much time it takes to reach the crucial target of an independent livelihood?


Table 1: Percentages single at selected ages: various western European countries, around 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>25-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


If economic opportunities were expanding in the 19th century, for what was the young adult waiting? Was there no partner, as a result of an uneven sex ratio? One of the intriguing aspects of Western family formation is the disturbing influence of regional labor market systems. Female servants might leave their rural community in considerable numbers and go to the city.6

Decisions about servanthood were taken much earlier than decisions about a marriage. Therefore, the local sex ratio of potential partners at an age of 15 - 30 years could be quite uneven, in rural communities as well as in cities. National data about the sex ratio are mostly roughly balanced, but can hide strongly uneven opportunities to find a partner. This situation might delay marriages.7

In his study about Spain, D.S. Reher demonstrated that the percentage share of domestic servants and the level of population density were important quantitative factors explaining regional variations in age at marriage and permanent celibacy. For female celibacy, the scarcity problems in the cities

turned out to be more decisive than for men in rural areas. Reher suggests that women would have had a shorter period to get to be married than men.\(^8\)

Should we think that high ages at marriage persisted in the 19th century because increasing unbalances of the sex ratio were compensating for the declining effect of traditional unbalances between land and population? Both elements should be included in a basic framework explaining regional differences of ages at marriage, but there are no findings suggesting that uneven sex ratios are an explanation of that importance.

Therefore, let us return to a world where partners did find each other. How would a rule of an independent livelihood really work as far as “age at marriage” regards? Hajnal referred to “arrangements” that could mitigate or strengthen the effects of the neolocality rule on marriage. Therefore, were decisions of parents of crucial importance? Were they determining regional and temporal differences in ages at marriage of their children, somewhere between 22 and 32? Following this line in thinking about parental dependency of adult children, I would suggest looking more at “independence” than at “livelihood”.

We know that there is a long tradition in European history and literature telling us that Western children had to obey their parents and to work for them. Part of this was, of course, that Western parents had to give consent to their children if they would like to marry. They felt that they had certain rights to be sustained by their children. A quite shocking expression of this practice is given by the nineteenth century novelist and social critic Stendhal who tells us about a father who visits his son in jail who is condemned to death. When it appears that his son possesses a certain amount of money he requires him to pay back all the costs of his education since his birth.\(^9\)

European parents had power. However, it is argued that they had not as much as in Asia. Arthur Wolf shows in his contribution to this volume how the strength of paternal authority is a crucial factor explaining differences in systems of nuptiality between Asia and Europe. European neolocality itself can be seen as the result of a relatively weak paternal authority that fails to keep and to control married adult children within the household. I would reply that to prevent adult children from marriage for ten, fifteen years or more could be seen as a quite good expression of a strong power of parents.

One wonders whether the explanatory power of “objective” economic scarcity of land, difficult employment opportunities, or unbalanced sex ratios is really that important. Maybe powerful parents simply wanted to keep the labor and the earnings of their children and made it impossible for them to marry. Interesting enough, the power of Western parents does not seem to be absolute


and steady, but related to circumstances. Paul Spagnoli warns us not to slip toward a vulgar Marxist assumption of economic self interest of parents. In European conditions, especially if the economy was booming, children might feel themselves free to go. David Sabean and George Alter suggest that in the 19th century parental authority was more questioned than in the 18th century. This was considered to be a major social problem. If European parental power was an important factor in determining nuptiality, could we find variables that would represent regional and temporal variations in the strength of it? In this contribution there will be an attempt to find them.

Let’s now take another view. To which extent adult unmarried children really would prefer to marry at an early age? Would this be in their self interest, even if their parents did not require them to stay at home, and if they could earn enough money to start a household? Adult children might look at alternatives to marriage, or might try to evade the threat of poverty caused by young offspring. Can we find variables that would represent regional and temporal variations in this “attractiveness of celibacy” to young adults?

Next section will be devoted to a short critical historiographic survey. This will result in the formulation of a children-oriented model explaining regional and temporal differences in Western Europe marriage patterns (section 2 and 3). Than I will test this framework by a quantitative model within a context that has rich information about economic, social, cultural, power and demographic conditions: 65 villages in the rural Netherlands in 1888 (section 4 and 5). Finally, some conclusions and discussion follow, including some tentative observations about the relevance of the tested explanatory framework for Europe as a whole (section 6 and 7).

2. Children and the world of Hajnal: some alternative or additional views

   a. “Tradition” and ages at marriage

How should one deal with the “cultural element” that would explain ages at marriage? Neolocality, inheritance systems and all kind of arrangements between the generations could be labeled as “given by tradition”, “cultural”, or “normative”. The question is however how culture comes to practice, to regional differences in ages at marriage. To what extent is this practice dominated by scarcity, power and choice?


Let us take the very important social group of wage-dependent workers in the 19th century. Hajnal himself was not writing about the working of the independent livelihood-issue in this case. Following his general way of reasoning, one could think of a model in which the expansion of modern industrial employment and the rise of the level of wages would give more possibilities to marriage and would lower ages at marriage. Is there some inverse relationship between wages and ages at marriage? Recent findings show that areas with industrialization, urbanization, proletarization and rising wages did not drastically lower ages at marriage.\textsuperscript{12} Actually, table 1 did show this. Was this caused by an overwhelming influence of “tradition”? Or did wage laborers have no incentives to marry at a low age?

There were incentives. The existing literature enables us to describe circumstances in which young adult laborers would marry at a low age in accordance with the Hajnalian livelihood-constraint.\textsuperscript{13} First, age and earnings. At 18 to 21, many laborers earned their maximum lifetime weekly wage. Even more important, since the 1860s there was a wage explosion going on all over Western Europe. Unskilled, low skilled and wandering laborers fall into this category. Secondly, age and parental power. Looking into local family and community life, one could suppose that in the households of these young adults parental authority was relatively weak and could not control the earnings of the children. The increasing role of Poor Law institutions was very important because it gave an increasing security for the future of the young couple and their parents. So they could marry at a low age. The whole bourgeois class was complaining about his. Thirdly, repeated unemployment, or a low capacity or propensity to save earnings would make everyone feel that for unmarried laborers it made no sense “to wait”. Lastly, parents, community and Church would even encourage young marriages if “waiting” would imply illegitimate pregnancies and births, concubinage, public drunkenness, idleness, and other dissoluteness. Marriage might develop the discipline needed for life, and the woman was supposed to have a special role in this.

However, our data show that most young adult laborers, although they were earning higher wages than their parents, continued to marry late in Western Europe, even at about 1900. Table 1 demonstrates that the classical European


\textsuperscript{13} Elements can be found in various studies about social differences in nuptiality and contemporary discussions about “untimely marriages”. For an overview: see Van Poppel, \textit{Trouwen in Nederland}, ch. III and VI.
marriage pattern is found in countries at a moment in time when most people did not exploit a farm or another enterprise at all. A general Western European process of industrialization, proletarization, and urbanization, as well as a strong wage increase in the second half of the 19th century could not destroy the Western European marriage pattern. If not for a farm or other enterprise, what were children waiting for in those years?

David Kertzer and Dennis Hogan point at the remarkable stability of marriage practices in Casalecchio during a period of strong industrialization. Together with other researchers they doubt the previously widely accepted idea that the process of proletarization would be accompanied by a lower marriage of age and a higher nuptiality of young people. In their case, the proletarian segment of the community married at much the same ages as the most traditional, sharecropping population. The authors claim that in this period between 1870 and 1920 cultural norms regarding postmarital residence and appropriate marriage age changed slowly, despite strong social change.14

Their conclusion seems to imply that economic conditions had changed and would enable the children of wage laborers to change the marriage pattern. However, they obey tradition. The interpretation of what happened comes close to a basic model explaining apparent stability in 19th and 20th century nuptiality and fertility, presented by Theo Engelen. Economic growth would give impulses to new behavior, but cultural sanctions are opposing this and loose ground only slowly.15 But again, how would this norm come to practice?

George Alter, observing high ages at marriage in 19th century industrial Liège, presents another type of explanation: the parents in the laboring class were simply dominant and selfish. They delayed the marriage of their children. However, economic conditions do matter: if young women worked in the textile industry or were active as unskilled day laborers, they were more likely to marry (and to marry at somewhat lower ages) than women who worked at home.16

Slowness of normative changes, caused by “tradition”, is certainly involved in the pattern of persistent high ages at marriage in 19th century Western Europe. Nevertheless, in this contribution I will try to construct a framework in which economic scarcity, parental power, the children’s own perspective, and cultural influences are integrated and weighted. The rather inconclusive working of an unspecified “cultural factor” can thus be developed in a more precise, restricted way.

b. Why marry? The children’s choice for marriage or celibacy

One of the more fundamental criticisms of Hajnal’s work has been formulated by Timothy Guinnane, discussing the case of Ireland.\(^1\) His main focus is permanent celibacy. Why were Irish adult children celibate at such a big scale around 1900 (see table 1)? In his view Hajnal failed to understand the “decision to marry”, and its incentives and alternatives. Hajnal would be too much a neo-Malthusian thinker, starting from an unquestioned desire for marriage. Permanent celibacy is explained far too much by failure, Guinnane argues, by supposing that many children simply could reach this target level of income. The explanation of Hajnal includes a servanthood trajectory leading to family looseness, and providing for skills and savings, all directed to a future marriage. According to Guinnane the explanation of Hajnal excludes any positive decision for a marriage and presents only a mechanical achievement of targets. Celibacy could be an excellent alternative for adult children to provide for future care and other needs, and the attraction to it could vary in time and space.

In the 1851-1911 period all Irish regions increased their levels of celibacy. The explanation of Guinnane is that this development was not caused by increasing poverty. Celibacy became more attractive. In his view marriage and child-rearing in Ireland were costly compared to other basic arrangements. Children may on average have yielded a negative net return to their parents but be rational investments, just as most insurance policies are a net cost to their buyers. This negative net return might be better if parents were able to employ child labor. Therefore, according to Guinnane, children of farmers would be cheaper than children of laborers. In addition, farmers and others who had some property, had an effective influence on their children. However, a good alternative could be to live with siblings, and to make use of property (or the Poor Law) to get help at the right moment.

The high celibacy figures of Ireland are intriguing indeed. One presupposition seems to be that the family is an ongoing process, a perpetually evolving property of a productive structure, guaranteeing care of the young for the old. One should remember that in this period many persons left Ireland to emigrate to the United States. Their choice to work permanently far outside the parental home brought them within another set of alternatives, with a less attractive perspective on celibacy: no circle of siblings to live with, no family property to spend for hired help if problems would occur, no predictable safety of a Poor Law. Given the high Irish rate of emigration – of persons who needed to marry in order to survive – the adult Irish children that decided to stay might be qualified as a group with a relatively strong propensity not to marry.

Therefore, would Western European rural regions with a substantial level

\(^{17}\) T. Guinnane, “Re-thinking the Western European Marriage Pattern: The Decision to Marry in Ireland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century”, in: Journal of Family History, 16 (1991), 47-64.
of net labor emigration have a “stronger” European marriage pattern than areas of immigration? This appears to be doubtful. If young adults would not have left the region, one could think that there would have been even more permanent celibacy and continuing dependency on the family eldest, or heir, than we observe in reality. This might be even stronger in the case of regions with the stem family system where one heir would take over the farm and other family members would reside there too.\footnote{18}

The non-Malthusian, neoclassical explanation of Guinnane claims that all people need a certain living standard and security but that they make choices. Changes in the Irish economy and the Poor Law left young adults with alternatives to the threatening burden of marriage and child-rearing. The alternatives enabled them to live comfortably without marrying, temporarily or permanently. Guinnane suggests that future advances in the history of European nuptiality would require worrying less about whether young adults could afford marriage, and thinking more about why they desired it.

A preference for celibacy might also be strengthened by cultural impulses. One might presume that it makes a difference whether a society is positive or negative toward adult unmarried persons. Mediaeval Christianity and modern Catholicism were certainly not negative to it. This was not only culture but also practice. Catholic regions created living space for celibate persons. Abbeys and congregations continued to be attractive places for young and adult unmarried children. In Protestantism, there was no particular appreciation or space for celibacy. Since high permanent celibacy is positively correlated with low nuptiality, it is not strange that authors like Theo Engelen, Frans van Poppel, and Bernard Derouet found that “Catholic” regions have somewhat higher ages at marriage than “Protestant” ones.\footnote{19}

In my view, attractiveness of a high age of marriage should also be related to a quite essential problem of the “independent” future of adult children that would like to marry: the threat of poverty and dependency after being married. The life cycle of poverty was well known: shortly after marriage the burden of children was too heavy, and after parents reached the age of 45, children were needed to supplement the income of parents. Hajnal cites Cantillon and other 18th century thinkers who put a relationship between a high age at marriage and a good standard of living.\footnote{20} But how did it work exactly?

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\footnote{20. Hajnal, “European Marriage Patterns”, 131, 133.}
Young adult laborers who would marry were facing a considerable loss of their standard of living, especially during the difficult early period of marriage, when children were too young to earn money. The threat of poverty was a frightening reality. Temporary celibacy could be attractive for one reason out of two: (1) to accumulate savings to form a sound financial basis of the marriage, including an appropriate inventory of the household and even the property of a house and maybe some land, or (2) to spend the earnings on personal consumption goods. For these quite opposite reasons, laborers would not marry at an early age, especially not if parents and employers left them relatively free to do what they wanted. Female servants were often more sharply controlled; for this reason these young adult women would tend to have a desire for a marriage at an earlier age than men.

I suggest looking more carefully at a gender aspect of the threat of poverty. In her analysis of Chinese children and their conditions in this volume, Hill Gates points at a crucial difference in the social practice of the economic value of women. In Europe women tended to concentrate their economic value before marriage and their reproductive value afterwards, whereas Chinese women combined both values more or less during their whole adult life.

In my view, the loss of earning power after marriage made the choice of Western women for a particular age at marriage an important “economic” decision with major implications for the savings, earning capacity and future poverty of the young couple. The higher the age at marriage, the stronger the economic contribution of the woman could be keeping the couple out of lasting poverty. However, the later she would marry the fewer children she would give birth to, and the more chance for poverty after her husband’s age of 45, or after the possible death of the husband.

In households of small producers that were organized in family economies, European women had to face important reproductive tasks after their marriage. They continued a reduced economic role on a steady basis. However, Louise Tilly and Joan Scott showed that expanding wage labor had specific effects on married women. In the “family wage economy” they faced big problems to continue an economic role and their earnings tended to become “episodic and irregular”. Marriage would reduce earnings and increase the risk of poverty.

Therefore, in this specific Western “switch” from economic to reproductive value – which is not an absolute one, of course – we find a major element in the hands of the woman. It directly regards the nature of her contribution to marriage and the future poverty problem of the couple and herself. At this point it should be remembered that Hajnal stressed the uniqueness of high female

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ages at marriage in Europe and wondered whether a land-scarcity approach could ever explain this.²²

In my view we should try to interrelate more precisely the burden of marriage, the strength of the “switch” in the nature of the contribution of the woman, and the age at marriage. I propose to substantiate “the burden of marriage” in a simple way: the number of surviving children. Time and money was needed for them. The number of actual surviving children might be low as a consequence of a low level of fertility and/or a high level of infant mortality. In that case, the burden was mild and would let women keep their economic role to a certain extent. There would be no heavy “switch”. Therefore, one might expect that in regions or periods with a general mild burden of marriage the couples would favor marrying at an earlier age than if they expected a heavy burden.

Why would young couples make a choice for a heavy burden of marriage, leading them to high ages at marriage, the reduction of the economic role of the woman, and considerable risks of poverty? The answer must lie in their concern about their own future independent livelihood, as a matter of fact the same kind of problem their parents were dealing with. As long as many children were contributing to family economies and to family wage economies, young couples would be prepared to invest in a heavy burden of marriage in the first place. This was the price for independency.

The Western “switch” in the economic role of women after marriage gives to “attractiveness of celibacy” a strong gender dimension. If the historical conditions of an “independent livelihood” required a heavy burden of care for children, a strong reduction of the post-marital earnings of women was inevitable. I would expect the young couple to make a rational choice for the right age at marriage, based on their own observation of real life – including the normal burden of marriage – in their community.

c. Children who wait and save? The parental constraint.
In a story called The Gambler, published in 1866, Fyodor Dostoyevski presents a shocking picture of the unique Western European marriage pattern. It could have been used by Hajnal as well. The main character of this novel, Alexeï Ivanovich, who is a family teacher and secretary, discusses with a Frenchman and a compatriot some basic differences in norms and behavior in Russian and Western European society. Roulette, Ivanovich claims, is invented precisely for the Russians: they are born players. And why? Because history has put the ability to accumulate capital in the first place in the Western European catechism of virtues. The Russians lack this ability, he continues, and therefore they are easily seduced by means like roulette to try to become rich. Ivanovich would never have

said something about family formation if he had not added a judgment about various ways of becoming rich. He did so by simply wondering what would provoke most aversion: the vulgar way of the Russians by playing roulette or the civilized German way by accumulating money by honest labor.

(...) “What a shocking idea!”, exclaimed the General.
“What a Russian idea!” exclaimed the Frenchman.

I laughed; I desperately wanted to provoke them.
“I’d rather fritter away my whole life in a Kirghiz tent,” I cried, “than worship the German idol”.

“What idol?” cried the General, who was beginning to get really angry.
“The German capacity for amassing wealth. (...) I swear I’ve no use for such virtues!

Yesterday I had time to cover about ten versts of country round about. Well, it’s all exactly like one of those moralizing little German picture books; everywhere among these people, every house has its Vater (in the Dutch translation the German word Hausvater is used, P.K.) dreadfully virtuous and exceedingly honest. So honest, in fact, that it’s terrible to go near him. I can’t stand people who are so honest it’s terrible to go near them. Every one of those Vaters has a family, and in the evening they all read improving books aloud to one another. The elms and chestnut trees rustle above the little cottage. There is the sunset, and a stork on the roof, and everything is extremely touching and poetic”.

“(…) Well, every family of that sort here belongs to the Vater in complete servitude and subjection. They all work like slaves and they all scrape up money (...). Suppose the Vater has already got together a few gulden, and is counting on handing over his trade or his bit of land to the eldest son; to this end the daughter is not given a dowry and remains an old maid. To this end also the younger son is sold into bondage or the army, and the money is added to the capital of the household. This really does happen here; I have been making inquiries. It is all done out of nothing but honesty, honesty carried to the point where even the younger son who has been sold believes that he was sold out of pure honesty – and it is an ideal state of affairs when the victim himself rejoices at being led to the slaughter. And what next? Next, things are no easier even for the elder son; he has his Amalchen, with whom his heart is united – but they can’t get married because not enough money has been scraped together yet. They wait virtuously, and, smiling in all sincerity, they too go like lambs to the slaughter. Amalchen’s cheeks are sunken, she is growing withered. At last, after about twenty years, the fortune has increased; the gulden have been honestly and virtuously amassed. The Vater gives his blessing to the forty-year-old son and the thirty-five-year-old Amalchen, with her withered breasts and her red nose (...). Thereupon he weeps, moralizes, and dies. The elder son is now transformed into a Vater and the whole story begins all over again. So after fifty years, or seventy years, the first Votaries grandson really has acquired a substantial fortune, which he hands onto his son, and he to his,
and he again to his (...) Well, sir, what a majestic spectacle! A century or two’s continuous labor, patience, intelligence, honesty, strength of character, steadfastness, foresight, and storks on the roof! What more can you want? There is after all no higher ideal than this, and from this elevation they begin judging the whole world, and instantly punishing the guilty, anybody, that is, who is different from them in the smallest particular. Well, so here’s the point: I would rather be a Russian rake or make my pile at roulette. I don’t want to be Hope and Co. after five generations. I need money for myself, and I don’t look on myself as merely an indispensable factor in the acquisition of wealth. I know I’ve talked an awful lot of nonsense but I don’t care. That’s what I think!”

Dostoyevsky would seduce everyone to continue reading his story about roulette, so firmly embedded in a comparative theory of virtues of the East and the West. Meanwhile, we find a broad perspective on the European marriage pattern. The independent livelihood constraint is fully confirmed as well as the high permanent celibacy of children. The stork represents uncontrolled fertility after marriage. More specifically, we are in a world dominated by hard work and by fathers. Obviously, children are educated in a culture in which parents try to maintain a family capital target.

That early marriages were a severe economic loss to parents was not a theme explicitly dealt within the German Hausväterliteratur. Its main goal was the internalization of good duties and virtues of children. Steven Ozment refers to three basic duties of children in Reformation Europe. The first was respect for parents and their self-sacrifice, with a special place for the mother. The second duty followed from the first: obedience to the will of the parents and the law. And lastly, they had to return the love and care of parents when they are old, poor or ill. Nothing was said about the extent to which parents might use labor and earnings of their children and delay their marriage. Opposing the view of Flandrin, who argues that children belonged to the fathers as his own property, Ozment claims that it is “a great self-serving myth of the modern world that the children of former times were raised as near slaves by domineering loveless fathers”. He is convinced that children were “loved by their parents”.

Dostoyevski, who knew how dominant Russian fathers were and who was certainly not scandalized by a strong paternal power, seems to add to this the crucial point that the whole German moral system of obedience and parental love

was rather suspect. It was perverted by the reality that just as long as children were unmarried the advantages to the parents would go on. In his observation the restricted nuptiality of the German children was primarily part of the will of the parents to accumulate capital or to keep a social position.

If children are raised in a culture in which strong parental power relations and heavy duties exist and a marriage is burdened by disadvantages to the parents, one wonders whether it is relevant to say that children were “waiting” for a marriage, and not that parents were delaying or preventing it. To which extent might regional variations in Western nuptiality be related to variations in the strength of this parental constraint, variations in power and need of parents?

Weaker types of relationship between children and parents were discussed by Peter Laslett, Alan Macfarlane, David Sabean and others.\textsuperscript{25} Laslett founded his ideas about “looseness” of family relations on the practice of servanthood. Children left the household at early age and were prepared in this way for neolocality. However, one should remark that during servanthood a strong power relationship continued. Nuclear families that were sending out servants were vulnerable to sickness and unemployment. Macfarlane discussed the power relationship itself and stressed the primacy of the individual over the family in the English context. Power relations between parents and children had to deal with what Hans Medick and David Sabean described as “interest and emotion” of both parties.\textsuperscript{26} Laslett’s “nuclear hardship hypothesis” showed that there is an interdependency between the obvious “vulnerability of nuclear families”, the degree of “looseness” of kinship relations (and servanthood), and the existence of sources of institutions providing for assistance and security outside the household.\textsuperscript{27}

Opposed to a strong individuality of children, one finds also family tightness and solidarity. If children worked in a patriarchal family farm, the parents would control the labor of the children and its yield completely. In a solidarity context the parents would expect the children to give all their money, and chil-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} On the “looseness” of family relations, see Peter Laslett, “Family, Kinship and Collectivity as Systems of Support in Pre-Industrial Europe: A Consideration of the ‘Nuclear-Hardship’ Hypothesis,” Continuity and Change, 3 (2) (1988), 160. About English individualism see Alan Macfarlane, The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978). For a critique of the idea that property was viewed as a familial (as opposed to an individual) resource among the continental peasantry, see David Warren Sabean, Property, Production and Family in Neckarhausen, 420-421.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Peter Laslett, “Family, Kinship and Collectivity”.
\end{itemize}
children would expect their parents to care for them completely, including the financing of their new household. In a modern, individualistic context, the children keep their earnings for themselves, and pay board to their parents. Obviously, in the latter case of a weaker parental constraint, the power of the parents to delay marriages is more restricted than in the family solidarity case.

Strong relationships between children and parents are found in Western forms of (temporary) patrilocality. The literature concerning Hajnal is full of contributions about places and groups lacking in strict neolocality. Many researchers demonstrated that in Western European regions non-nuclear households were present and sometimes even dominant: in other regions short periods of extension with family members were found in many households and several types of complex family systems have been identified throughout Western Europe.\(^{28}\) In 1983 Peter Laslett introduced a geographically distinct model of family formation and marriage: one for North Western Europe and one for Mediterranean Europe. In the South the dominant pattern would be different: a marriage would not imply a new household. Nevertheless male age at marriage would be high in both areas, but female age at marriage low and the spousal age gap big in the Mediterranean.\(^{29}\)

Kertzer and Hogan criticized the regional models of Laslett by presenting the case of Casalecchio in Italy in the 1865-1921 period. High ages of men (28 years), but also of women (25 years), a small spousal age gap, and a rate of definitive celibacy of 10-15% were all “Northern” elements. Their research confirmed that there was a strong patrilocal tradition of post-marital residence at the same time. In 1871, 51% of married men under age 35 were not head of a household. Patrilocality was also present in the non-agricultural proletariat, but much less than in other social groups.\(^{30}\) Kertzer and Hogan would think mainly of “cultural norms” that explain why patrilocality persisted.

\(^{28}\) Pierre Goubert, “Family and Province: A Contribution to the Knowledge of Family Structures in Early Modern France,” in: *Journal of Family History*, 2, 3 (1977), 179-195 showed how complex family organization was strongly developed in France.


Which factors would influence the strength of the power of the parents and the duties of the children? Recent findings suggest at least three elements.\(^{31}\) First of all, there is a power given by family law to parents to refuse the legally required consent for marriage. However, courageous children could try to make a marriage inevitable. The Church would intervene if the woman expected a child. Secondly, following the line of reasoning of Arthur Wolf, property gave parents a certain power. This could be used by parents to deal with their care and security problem after their age of about 45: they could go into the household of married children, or hire servants, or keep unmarried or married children in their own household. If there was no property, the parents had a problem of care when they became old. Married children would be unable to help them because of their own responsibilities. Did these parents have a kind of effective “Christian” power to keep unmarried children for their well-being? This seems to depend on the existence of alternative institutional arrangements in the community. If they existed, such as poor institutions supporting old people, one can expect that the parental constraint for children to marry and leave the household of their parents would be rather weak.

In the case of the laborers, the parental constraint must have worked as well, although there was not much property to strengthen this power. However, to compensate for this there was public authority supporting the power of the parents. In order to control outlays for poor relief community and church were active throughout the whole of Western Europe to prevent young laborers from leaving their parents and marrying at a young age.\(^{32}\) Both institutions tended to strengthen the parental constraint of laborers, especially if they were in poor circumstances. A rather general social norm was that children would give their earnings to their parents.

The necessity of a consent of the parents could be quite decisive for young laborers in situations of scarcity of dwellings. Western short term patrilocality of just married laborers has been described in fast industrializing cities. Parents allowed children – who would work elsewhere and had to look after their own family – to live in the scarce space of their own house during a short period after the marriage.\(^{33}\)

In which circumstances one can expect the parental constraint of wage laborers to be lesser? The level of real wages must have had some influence. If

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32. Van Poppel, *Trouwen in Nederland*. 
parents were in better conditions, their control might have been less strong. On the general European level we find a slow increase of nuptiality in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period of rising wages. Another indication is given by Theo Engelen and Paul Klep who argue that after 1870 children became economically less important to parents as a result of rising wages (that made parents less dependent) and increasing school attendance (that increased costs).

3. Looking at the position of adult children

It is not an easy task to describe the world of variables explaining the age of marriage and the extent of celibacy from the point of view of the adult child. There are many worlds and levels of analysis. We have to make a choice. In this contribution there is no discussion about questions like whether the timing of marriage would be affected by the survival of a child’s parents, or to which extent nuptiality is affected by the seniority among the children in a household. This is not the type of question toward which the Hajnal thesis turns. Basically the level of analysis in this paper is not the individual child and its individual events, but the various regional forms of behavior of groups of children at the level of communities.

The analysis of this variation is not intended to show how many places there were where the European model of Hajnal is not particularly relevant. While thinking about table 1 and its national diversity of nuptiality about 1900, the renewed analysis of existing literature is suggesting that the perspective of the adult children needs more consideration. Hajnal’s central explanatory variable “independent livelihood” cannot be reduced to a situation of neo-Malthusian scarcity of land including “waiting for a farm” and “servanthood”. There are serious doubts whether economic (and also demographic) scarcity has a primary position in explaining various ages at marriage.

The Asian perspective teaches that the strength of parental control is a basic element. The European version of it is quite different and mainly property

33. For an example in Southern Europe, see Kertzer and Hogan, “Reflections”; for Western Europe, see Angelique Janssens, Family and social change. The household as a process in an industrializing community (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), who discusses systems of co-resident kin and intergenerational relations during the family cycle. In Tilburg, a fast expanding industrial city during the second half of the nineteenth century she found a sharp increasing proportion of households with co-resident married children who stayed a short period. In this city sons were marrying at 27.4 years and daughters at 25.7 years.

34. See the contribution of François Hendrickx in this volume.

based as Arthur Wolf argues. However, European parents exerted also a “Christian” normative power requiring love of their children born out of duty and discipline and therefore they would require them to work for them. They seem to exert this power more effectively in poor than in wealthy conditions.

In the last section it has been argued that young adults may delay their marriage for their own reasons. (Temporary) celibacy might be quite attractive if a heavy burden of marriage was to be expected. The heavier the burden the more the woman would lose her economic role after marriage and the more poverty would threaten the young couple. Celibacy might be even more attractive if the moral reputation of celibate life was positive in the local community.

Therefore, I propose that the basic framework explaining regional variation in ages at marriage will be related to four distinctive elements.

(1) Variation in the percent of families related to the neo-Malthusian livelihood complex of land scarcity or to servanthood.
(2) Variation in scarcity of partners on the marriage market.
Two major elements are added that are related to the specific position of children:
(3) Variation in the strength of the parental constraint on the marriage of their children, and
(4) Variation in the attractiveness of celibacy to young adults.

4. The framework at work: the Dutch case of rural villages, 1889
A short test of the explaining power of the elements selected so far will provide for some evaluation. The choice has been made for an analysis of rural variation in the Netherlands in 1888. The source is very rich. The agricultural context makes it possible to test the importance of Hajnal’s economic scarcity argument in classical terms of need for land and servanthood in the first place. In table 1 and 2, it is shown that the Netherlands has a position of great “normalcy” in the Western European pattern. Percentages of single persons are quite high, for men as well for women. The 19th century historical pattern shows an overall stability, although urbanization and industrialization processes developed strongly after 1870.

Neolocality was a general phenomenon in the Netherlands. Nuclear family formation was the basic norm, although in particular villages stem families or joint families could occur. Temporary arrangements of extended families at the beginning or the end of the household cycle were more widespread. Young couples would stay a short while in the house of parents after their marriage, or elderly people would move to the house of one of their married children.36

Data
Data for 65 rural agricultural communities have been collected from the Dutch Agricultural Survey of 1888 and supplemented by other sources. The Agricultural Survey provides us with village data about age at marriage, households with
land exploitation (including small holdings), and the level of wages paid to agricultural workers. A social survey concerning socioeconomic conditions of agricultural laborers about 1908\(^3\)\(^8\) tells us in which villages children gave their earnings to their parents, and in which not.

**Variables**

Variable definitions, Means, and Standard Deviation are specified in table 3. The dependent variable \(\text{MMAM}\) (Mean Male Age at Marriage) is measured in 65 villages and varies between 24 and 31, the \(\text{MFAM}\) (Female) between 23 and 29. The

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**Table 2: Percentages single at selected ages, the Netherlands, 1830-1909**

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<th>Men</th>
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<th>Women</th>
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<tr>
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<td>51</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
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Source: Population Censuses

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mean age gap is two years, varying between 0.5 and 3.8. Celibacy is expressed as percentage single (never married) in the 45-54 age group. The mean of the 94 villages included varies between 4 and 28% for men and 0 and 22% for women.

Two measures are reflecting the world of Hajnal at a village level. Villages with a high percent of households with land exploitation (hhlp) and a high number of domestic servants per 100 households (servp) are considered to be dominated by family economies. Here many children were confronted with the big problem to acquire land (or to get another position of production). Considering recent findings discussed earlier in this contribution, we expect the explanatory power of these factors to be rather weak. Arrangements between children and parents might have a disturbing influence. Villages elsewhere in Europe with low hhlp and low servp, and with many (agricultural) wage laborers display high ages at marriage.

One measure is constructed to reflect scarcity of partners on the local marriage market: the number of unmarried men per 100 unmarried women in the 20-24 age bracket (sexr24). Unevenness of sex ratios might be important, so as Reher has shown.

Two measures are presented to express two aspects of the parental constraint on marriage of adult children. The first is the extent of parental effective control on the earnings and labor of their children. In this case they had the actual power to delay the marriage: they had to finance the wedding. We know in which villages there was a habit that children gave their earnings completely to their parents (give = 1). In many villages this habit did not exist anymore: children kept their money by themselves. They paid boarding or – if they were servants elsewhere – nothing. We might expect this factor give to have an influence, unless adult children who kept their money would choose to marry at high ages for their own reasons, and unless controlling parents would gladly allow their children to marry at low ages.

The second variable of parental constraint is much harder: poverty of parents enforces their consumption of earnings and labor of their adult children. We expect the wage level to reflect this (wage). In areas with a low wage level we suppose parents in strong need to absorb earnings and labor of their children, whereas poor institutions are badly developed. Public and church authorities would help to force children to contribute to their parents and to delay marriage. In rich villages we expect this parental combination of need and power to be less strong and the parents to be less demanding. We also expect adult children to be less obedient there, because of the less poor situation of their parents and more attractive economic opportunities in a more developed local economy.

The “attractiveness of celibacy” to adult children is reflected by two measures. I propose to use as the first one some notion of the “burden of marriage”, so as experienced by adult children in social contacts with their family and
neighborhood. This burden is composed of time and effort spent by the married woman (at cost of her personal economic value and reducing the earnings of the couple), as well as costs of raising kids (to be paid by the couple during the years after marriage). The local variation of this burden depends on the number of children, and their spacing. Of course, some children would die. If many children died, the burden would be more spaced and less heavy, at least as for time, effort and costs. It is known that the Dutch rural levels of fertility and infant mortality varied strongly, and quite independently. I suppose that young adults had a strong sense for the weight of this future burden. The more the weight, the more the hesitations and preparations. However, as I argued earlier in this con-

Table 3: Variable definitions, Means and Standard Deviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Definition</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Dependent Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMAM</td>
<td>Mean Male Age at Marriage</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFAM</td>
<td>Mean Female Age at Marriage</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELMP</td>
<td>Percent of Never Married Men 45-54</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELFP</td>
<td>Percent Never Married Women 45-49</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hajnal’s Variables: scarcity of positions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HHLP</td>
<td>Percent of Households with Land Exploitation</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>SERVP</td>
<td>Mean Number of Servants per 100 Households</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>c. Marriage Market Variable: scarcity of partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEX24</td>
<td>Unmarried Male per 100 Unmarried Female in 20-24 Age Group</td>
<td>134.2</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>86</td>
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<td>d. Parental Constraint on Marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIVE</td>
<td>Children Give their Earnings to their Parents (1), or not (0)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAGE</td>
<td>Wage Level, Cents/Hour</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Attractiveness of Celibacy to Adult Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURDEN</td>
<td>Births per 1000 Married Women 15-44/Infant Mortality</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>RESCATH</td>
<td>Unstandardized Residual of Percentage of Catholics</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>-61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tribution, this tendency was balanced by the strong need for surviving children in later phases of the marriage. To express it sharply: the actual weight of the burden was to a large extent a deliberate choice visible in social practice. In the model the burden will be represented by using two interrelated factors: fertility level divided by infant mortality level, taken together in one coefficient (burden). This burden varies between 1.2 and 4.6 (see table 3).

The second variable concerns the question how (temporary and definitive) celibacy will be appreciated by young adults. Roman Catholicism would teach them a more positive moral and practical appreciation than Protestantism. Abbeys and congregations are an expression of it. Therefore, it is expected to find a certain delay of marriages as well as higher permanent celibacy in Catholic villages compared to Protestant ones. It is known that a simple representation of Catholicism (percent of population that is Catholic) is a measure too crude, because it has a strong correlation with other independent variables. The reason for this is that Catholicism is rather concentrated in poor areas of small peasants. Catholicism would include too much of the other variables. Therefore the unstandardized residual of the other independent factors on Catholicism has been used to get a specific effect of Catholicism (rescath).  

Would wage not be a factor that is influencing the children’s behavior directly? As has been discussed in this contribution and that of François Hendrickx elsewhere in this volume, ages and wages seem to be related inversely. In my view the relation works through the parental constraint, but would not high wages let young adults reach their “targets” earlier and allow them to marry at a lower age? I think that this is simply a kind of 19th century bourgeois idea about the laboring class that is completely misdirected for the great majority of wage earners. Rising wages are known to increase expectations and to increase the propensity to consume luxury goods. The time needed to form an adequate “marriage fund” might therefore not be less than before. I propose another way of thinking. Rising wages could imply two things that would let young adults choose for a reduced burden of marriage. Firstly, the development of a better social security as an alternative solution for problems of a future livelihood of the young couple after the age of about 45, and secondly, the decline of the economic utility of children caused by higher costs and more time for school attendance. If the burden of marriage would decline, one might expect lower ages at marriage. Theoretically, the conclusion is that the parental constraint on marriages will be dependent on wage,

39. Fertility and infant mortality show a Pearson correlation of .25 (significant at the .05 level). Fertility has a mean of 360 and a minimum and maximum of 230 and 484 births per 1000 married women (15-44). Infant mortality shows a mean of 173 and fluctuates between 86 and 312.

40. Engelen, Fertiliteit, arbeid, mentaliteit; Van Poppel, Trouwen in Nederland, use some form of rescath too.
and the choice of the young adults will be dependent on their burden of marriage.

Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum (see table 3) show that the Dutch agricultural world about 1888 was highly differentiated, as it was since the Dutch Golden 17th century. The country was divided in high and low wage areas, in high and low land price areas, in capitalistic and family farming, in a great variety of regional agricultural specialization, a strong diversity of labor and capital intensity and very different regional labor markets, including various mixes of traditional servanthood, fixed and non-fixed wage laborers living outdoor, wandering labor, and migration of labor to the cities.41

5. Testing the model

Table 4 reports regression estimates for the rural variation of $\text{mmam}$, $\text{mfam}$ (mean age at marriage for men and women), and $\text{celmp}$ and $\text{celfp}$ (percent never married at age group 45-54) in the rural Netherlands, 1888. Preliminary tests showed that some variables attained very low significance levels and had to be excluded.

A very important one that had to be removed is the central Hajnalian $\text{hhlp}$ variable. High ages at marriage were not caused by children waiting for a scarce holding or position. The failure of the $\text{hhlp}$ confirms recent doubts and findings that “waiting for land” or a position is not crucial for high ages at marriage. In the Dutch case, various arrangements for young adults who needed land existed. Many small farmers got a holding on a part-time basis, while others tend to follow a growth model: they would live at home and do wage work, start with a parcel of land, and than they would to try to extend it gradually. This system demanded for years of work, without a burden of children. However, an important exception is villages where many horticultural holdings exist. Here we find the gradual land arrangement too, but also low ages at marriage, because of a strong need for family labor.

The influence of another Hajnalian variable, $\text{servp}$, is rather inconclusive and weak. Variation in agricultural servanthood was not an important social element to explain regional differences in ages at marriage. Much servanthood of the rural population is not observed in the local population because of migration to the cities. However, it is doubtful whether the inclusion of this phenomenon would give better results since this type of (mostly) female workers married at high ages.

Another variable that had to be excluded is sexr24. Variations in the uneven sex-ratio did not have a significant influence. This result might confirm the findings of D. Reher concerning Spain. He found that male surpluses did not disturb nuptiality as much as female surpluses would do. One wonders whether in the Dutch case the small distances to the cities and the good means of transport reduced the strength of this variable.

Models (1), (2) and (3) in table 4 show that the new “children oriented” measures representing “parental constraint” (give and wage) and “attractiveness of celibacy” (burden and rescath) perform quite well. The variables show the expected signs and their Sig T values are good. Burden deserves special interest: it explains a lot of the male’s age at marriage. This seems to imply that the possible loss of earnings of the young couple, which was caused by a female “switch” from an economic to a reproductive role, was deterring men as well as women. It is interesting too, that wage – here seen as a major expression of the livelihood of parents and not of children – works well.

The three models suggest strongly that a neo-Malthusian perception of the Hajnalian “independent livelihood” rule cannot be accepted. Other important conditions are more relevant: the actual control of parents on the work of their children, the effective use of this control by parents against marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MMAM</td>
<td>28.16***</td>
<td>28.43***</td>
<td>27.46***</td>
<td>28.50***</td>
<td>23.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMAM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFAM</td>
<td>1.00***</td>
<td>0.95***</td>
<td>0.74**</td>
<td>2.61*</td>
<td>1.99*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELMP</td>
<td>-0.33***</td>
<td>-0.33***</td>
<td>-0.36***</td>
<td>-1.66***</td>
<td>-1.37***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELFP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURDEN</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
<td>0.72***</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESCAH</td>
<td>2.0E-02***</td>
<td>2.0-02***</td>
<td>2.1-02***</td>
<td>6.8-02***</td>
<td>7.4-02***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Square</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td>0.779</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td>0.626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Square (adj.)</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td>0.769</td>
<td>0.495</td>
<td>0.613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p <0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001
(depending on their poverty), the deterring effect of a high burden of marriage, and the moral reputation and practice of celibacy.

How strong are these “new” explaining factors? The standardized Beta coefficients show a quite balanced strength. In model (2) the parental constraint variables give and wage show a Beta like .23 and -.43 respectively. The attractiveness of celibacy shows values of Betas that suggest an interesting explanatory power too: burden .35 and rescath .39.

Comparing model (2) and (3) it is confirmed that the general explanatory framework of variables is the same. This result suggests that young men and women were facing the same kind of incentive and constrains. The standardized Betas of the female ages at marriage (see Model (3)) do show that some variables had a somewhat stronger effect (wage -.51, rescath .45) and other variables somewhat less (burden .23, give .20). Poverty of parents and Catholic celibacy seem to work slightly harder on women than on men. burden was not stronger in the case of women. This suggests that the livelihood problem caused by the “switch” that women made from an economic role to a reproductive one was not therefore dominating their own ages of marriage.

How about permanent celibacy? Scarcity, power or choice? Models (4) and (5) show that the explanatory framework works much less in this case, although one can observe that also in this case the “family economy” variables (dependency on land (hhlp) and servanthood (servp)) don’t work either. Uneven sex ratios (sexr24) don’t work even if the 25-29 age bracket is chosen. The main accent now shifts toward wage and rescath. The variable rescath (Beta about .4) is representing here simply the attractive fact that abbeys and congregations gave an alternative. Wage representing the power and need of parents has a dominating weight (Beta about -.55). Villages with high wages show relatively low levels of permanent celibacy. In my view high wages implied more relaxed parents, a better developed public poor relief, and a more competitive local labor market. This created a greater challenge to the power of the parents because of the wider opportunities for the children. In villages of great poverty, parents had no other choice than to keep their children, supported in this strategy by community and Church. The active variables explain more in the case of females, suggesting that parents and Church had a somewhat stronger long term grip on daughters than on sons.

6. Conclusions: Hajnal revisited
There can be little doubt that a simple land scarcity representation of the Hajnalian “independent livelihood” rule cannot be accepted. The enlarged explanatory framework that was proposed (table 3) and tested in Dutch agricultural villages about 1888 (table 4) gives much more credit to child-related power and choice problems than a neo-Malthusian “scarcity of land” perception. Dependency of
young adults on land and servanthood turned out to be not relevant to explain regional variation in ages at marriage of permanent celibacy.

Power and need of the parents, as well as attractiveness of celibacy to the young adults were much more important. The “independent livelihood” problem does not seem a kind of a marriage “target” problem for the young couple, but should be related to two livelihood complexities. Firstly, there is the livelihood problem of parents, whether they are powerful or poor. Their livelihood problem competes directly with that of the young couple. Secondly there is the problem of securing a future livelihood of the couple after their age of about 45. It seems that this is a central point to understand: the vulnerable livelihood of persons of 45 and older in systems of neolocality. If poor (in conditions of low wage) parents needed children they had to delay their children’s marriage.

That burden was a strong variable should be interpreted in this perspective too. In case of a high expected burden of marriage unmarried adult children would choose a long period of celibacy. If they expected a relatively small burden of marriage (in terms of surviving children) they would choose to marry at a lower age. One may wonder why young adults in some villages dealt with a heavy burden and in other villages not. Table 3 displays a variation between 1.2 and 4.6. Can we explain this referring to “objective” demographic conditions, especially infant mortality? I would propose to think of a more rational attitude of the young adults, who were avoiding poverty in the long run.

In poor villages, with bad Poor Law regulations, young adults had to make a choice for a heavy burden since this was essential for a “golden” livelihood when they would reach the age of 45 and after. They needed many children because of the gradual loss of income when these children started to save for their own marriage. This consideration of young adults in favor of a heavy burden – that caused to marry at high age – shifts our attention quite radically from the “target costs” of marriage to the whole life cycle of income and poverty, and especially the later phases of it. In other villages with higher wage levels, fewer possibilities to control earning children, and with better poor regulations, young adults would not plan to use labor and earnings of their unmarried children so intensely.

In this way, the burden becomes a relevant (see table 4) and even strategic variable. If their high age livelihood in local circumstances did not need many surviving children, young adults would reckon with a smaller burden of fewer children. And, additionally, the costly female “switch” from an economic role to a reproductive one, which was precisely caused by a marriage, would be less strong. A lower burden would allow her to continue her economic role in a better way. Therefore a lower expected burden reduced the attractiveness of a long period of celibacy and gave space to lower ages at marriage.

How would young adults adapt the burden to a smaller need of surviving
children? In the rural Netherlands a great regional variation of fertility and infant mortality levels were observed. Their correlation was low. In local conditions of high infant mortality young adults would choose not to push their fertility till the maximum anymore, and in conditions of declining or low infant mortality they would try to reduce the number of births.

7. Relevance for Western Europe, 16th-20th centuries
How relevant would this framework that is “children oriented” (see table 3) be for an explanation of regional variations in the European Marriage Pattern within the whole of Europe since 1500? Some tentative observations can be made.

The test of the framework (table 4) confirms some recent findings that have been discussed in this contribution and elsewhere in this volume that the “waiting for a niche” explanation is not really helpful to explain regional differences in ages at marriage. The power and need of parents, as well as the choices made by children must be given more credit; these are well-known topics throughout modern times.

In the Dutch case, a strong influence of the parental constraint has been found. Do we have reason to believe that this was a unique Dutch situation? There is reason to believe the opposite: power and need of Dutch parents in 1888 were probably less strong than in any period or region of Western Europe before that time, maybe with the exception of another region with high wages, England.

Actually, many authors have been cited who refer to a great European variety of family and land arrangements, including inheritance systems. They show an inclination to label these as “regional cultures”, and to refer to “cultural sanctions” that are opposing new developments. I would propose to incorporate these cultural elements in a more general view on the “parental constraint” and, more specifically, on the factors that would enforce or lessen this constraint. The more we go back into European history, the higher seems the degree to which parents effectively control labor and income of their offspring (and let them marry at the age they want). What seems to make changes in ages at marriage is the relative sharpness of the need of parents to effectively use their adult children.

Looking at the results of the test, one wonders whether servanthood is correctly interpreted as a European labor system that functions to earn money till the “marriage target” has been reached. Would higher wages really help to lower the ages at marriage? In my view servanthood is just an aspect of the sphere of parental constraint and its independent factors. A delaying effect of servanthood could be possible if earnings of young adults were controlled in the relationship between the employer and poor parents.

How about the observed influence of Catholicism? Catholicism has been accepted as a general element that would delay marriages in some regional studies in Europe that has been discussed. It is clear that it is not easy to extract the
really normative element in this. In territories that are completely Catholic, the factor will not be visible. Nevertheless, Catholicism offers some alternatives to marriage, and the pure existence of these alternatives will delay marriages: high celibacy and high ages at marriage are strongly and positively correlated.

The Dutch material challenges us to believe Dostoyevski much more than Hajnal. This contribution offers reasons to abandon the whole idea of Hajnal that it is important to think of marriage targets. It is suggested that a combination of parental constraints (that could become weaker) and personal preference of the adult children themselves (not yet married) explains why in the history of Western Europe people were marrying late. The furious interpretation of Western European marriage habits by Dostoyevski seems to be half-true. He constructed a terrible *Hausvater* with power and property. He did not see how cautiously German adult children tried to handle the threatening risks of marriage to avoid sustaining poverty and dependency, and how unavoidable their burden of marriage was. But can we not forgive a gambler for thinking like that?

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### Appendix

Bivariate Correlation Coefficients for Variables Used, Dutch Agricultural Villages, 1888

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HUMG</th>
<th>CELFP</th>
<th>HHLP</th>
<th>SERVP</th>
<th>SEX24</th>
<th>GIVE</th>
<th>WAGE</th>
<th>BURDEN</th>
<th>RESCATH</th>
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<td>HUMG</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELFP</td>
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<tr>
<td>HHLP</td>
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<td>0.36**</td>
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<tr>
<td>SERVP</td>
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<td>0.21*</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<td>-0.09</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIVE</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.23*</td>
<td>0.33***</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAGE</td>
<td>-0.71***</td>
<td>-0.63***</td>
<td>-0.63***</td>
<td>-0.37***</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BURDEN</td>
<td>0.64***</td>
<td>-0.36***</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
<td>0.55**</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.62***</td>
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<td>RESCATH</td>
<td>0.44***</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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*P<0.05; ** P<0.01; *** P<0.001
The European marriage pattern in perspective, or, What if Hajnal had been Chinese?

Chuang Ying-chang & Arthur P. Wolf
The figure depends for its characteristics upon the ground on which it appears. The ground serves as the framework in which the figure is suspended and thereby determines the figure.

K. Koffka, Principles of Gestalt Psychology

It is easy to imagine that John Hajnal’s discovery of the European marriage pattern was partly a product of his perspective as a native of Hungary. Coming from beyond the line marking the pattern’s eastern limit, he was prepared to see what made the pattern “unique or almost unique in the world.” For him, marriage in the mid to late twenties and a high celibacy rate were unfamiliar. His interest was aroused because his experience had led him to assume that marriage in the teens was natural and celibacy unnatural.

This paper addresses a speculative question: What would the European marriage pattern look like if John Hajnal had come, not from Hungary just beyond the Leningrad/Trieste line, but from China at the other end of the continent? Undoubtedly, late marriage and frequent celibacy would still be among its most salient characteristics, since these features of European marriage would seem as peculiar to a Chinese as to a Hungarian. But what else would have engaged the attention of a curious Chinese scholar living in Europe? Did marriage in Europe have other peculiarities that Hajnal did not note but that a Chinese scholar would have noted and included as characteristics of the European marriage pattern?

Answering this question requires getting behind the image of marriage presented in Confucian texts. It requires seeing what Chinese people actually did. We will therefore begin by summarizing the results of several recent studies that greatly clarify our picture of marriage in the Chinese countryside by quantifying the more common practices. Our summary will be confined to first marriages and largely to what we call “form of marriage.” What we mean by this will become clear as we proceed.

In recounting his experience as a missionary in northern Taiwan in the 1880’s the Rev. George MacKay noted that “the most common method” of obtaining a wife for one’s son was “to purchase a young girl and bring her up in [your] home.” The other method was to wait until your son was a young adult and then betroth him to a teenage girl. These are what are now generally called the “minor” and “major” forms of marriage. The essential difference between them
was the age at which the bride entered her husband’s family. The bride in minor marriages was usually a small child and commonly an infant; the bride in major marriages was almost always a nubile young adult.

Although the minor form of marriages is rarely mentioned in Chinese accounts of local custom, we now know that MacKay’s “the most common method” is only a slight exaggeration so long as it is understood as referring to northern Taiwan. The figures presented in table 1 are drawn from household registers compiled by the Japanese colonial government in the years 1905-45.5 Ignore for the moment the figures for uxorilocal marriages. We will return to these later. The point to note is that in many localities minor marriages constituted a substantial proportion of all first marriages. In the seven northern localities their numbers rivalled those of major marriages, and in the Pescadores Islands they actually outnumbered major marriages. They were least common in southern Taiwan where the thrust of Chinese customs may have been blunted by marriage between the Chinese settlers and the indigenous Plains Aborigines. The lowest frequency of all was in Chi-pei where Han Chinese still constitute only a small fraction of the total population.6

The evidence presented in table 1 does not stand alone. It confirms the results of studies conducted in the 1920’s and 30’s by Japanese and Japanesetrained researchers, most notably Tai Yen-hui, Okada Uzuru, Ikeda Toshio, and Kajiwara Michiyoshi.7 They also reported high frequencies of minor marriages in many Taiwanese communities. But is this significant for the study of marriage in China? Might it not be that Taiwan’s history makes its marriage regime exceptional? The answer is clearly “yes” if one takes the customs of the North China Plain or the Yellow River Basin as the standard for judging what is Chinese, but it is clearly “no” if one takes account of the customs of Kiangsu, Chekiang, Kiangsi, Fukien, and Kuangtung. Mao Tse-tung was not the first or the last author to argue that in many parts of South China, poor men could not marry at all if their parents did not have the foresight to raise their wife.8

5. These registers are described in detail in Wolf and Huang, *Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945*, chapter 2, p. 16-33.
7. See Tai Yen-hui, “Sim-pua zakko” (Miscellaneous notes on sim-pua), *Minzoku Taiwan*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Nov. 1943), 1-5; Okada Yuzuru, *Kiso shakai* (Elementary groups of society; Tokyo: Kobundo, 1949); Ikeda Toshio, *Taiwan no katei seikatsu* (Family life in Taiwan; Taipei: Toto shoseki, Taihoku shiten, 1944); and Kajiwara Michiyoshi, *Taiwan nomin seikatsu ko* (An examination of the life of Taiwanese peasants; Taipei: Ogata Takezo, 1941).
years of the Ch’ing dynasty the central government undertook a massive survey of Chinese customs in preparation for promulgating a Western-style legal code. This was later published as the Min-shang-shih hsi-kuan tiao-ch’a pao-kao-lu (hereafter the mhtp) and contains the following report concerning marriage customs in southern Kiangsi. T’ung-yang-hsi is the standard term for girls being raised for minor marriages. It means “daughter-in-law raised from childhood.”

To avoid the burden of marriage expenses, five or six of every ten families take a t’ung-yang-hsi. And in addition to t’ung-yang-hsi, there are what are called hua-teng-nu (...). There are fewer hua-teng-nu than t’ung-yang-hsi, but three or four of every ten families have hua-teng-nu. With the exception of very prominent households, betrothal in its true [i.e., its major] form only occurs in one or two of every ten families. 9

Table 1 Relative Frequency of Major, Minor, and Uxorilocal Marriages Among Taiwanese Women Born in the Years 1886-1895

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field site</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Percent major marriages</th>
<th>Percent minor marriages</th>
<th>Percent uxorilocal marriages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Taiwan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chu-pei</td>
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<td>37.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
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<td>34.2</td>
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<td>10.4</td>
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<td>37.8</td>
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<td>21.8</td>
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<td>Tung-kang</td>
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<td>Pescadores</td>
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<td>Peng-hu</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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</table>
Forty years later, at the time of the Marriage Reform Campaign, the *Ho-pei Jih-pao*, editorializing against “such barbarous and feudal practices as the keeping of *t'ung-yang-hsi*,” claimed that “of all the women in P'ing-ho hsien in Fukien, 70 percent are *t'ung-yang-hsi* at present or have been *t'ung-yang-hsi*.” At the same time one article in the *Nan-fang Jih-pao* reported that in Pien-chih-lou, a village in the third *ch'u* of Feng-shun hsien in northern Kuangtung, “80 percent of the women had been *t'ung-yang-hsi* before marriage,” and another reported “*t'ung-yang-hsi* account for 80 percent of the total female populations of Hsing-ning hsien (also in northern Kwangtung).” The article noted that in Lo-chung hsiang in Fou-kang *ch'u* “more than 90 percent of the women are *t'ung-yang-hsi*. They include 379 *t'ung-yang-hsi* who have not yet married.”

It is likely that these reports were selected for publication because they underlined the need for marriage reform, but there is no reason to think that the figures are grossly exaggerated. Similarly high figures for the same region were reported by Chung Ch'i-sheng in 1946 on the basis of his careful survey of three counties in southwestern Fukien. In addition, the Fukien section of the *MHTP* contains a report suggesting that minor marriage constituted eighty or ninety percent of all first marriages among poor families in Sun-ch'ang hsien in northwestern Fukien.

In Sun-ch'ang hsien very poor families regularly adopt female children of another surname to be adopted daughters-in-law. There is no matchmaker to act as witness, and the brideprice is whatever value is set on the girl. The marriage is put into effect when she comes of age. The ceremony is simple and is known as *yuan-fang*. Of every ten families eight or nine are like this.

Frequency of minor marriages as high as thirty percent are also suggested by Fei Hsiao-tung’s famous study of Kaihsienkung, Feng Tzu-kang’s survey of Lan-ch’i hsien, and by the casual observations of missionaries and travellers. Still the possibility remains that these reports exaggerate the frequency of minor marriages in the China mainland. It could be that reporting minor marriages is

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12. Chung Ch’i-sheng, “Min-hsi t’ung-yang-hsi wen-t’i yen-chiu” (The t’ung-yang-hsi question in Western Fukien), *She-hui k’t’-hsueh*, vol. 2, nos. 3-4 (1946).
like sighting cougars in California. Because cougars are seldom sighted and make a strong impression when they are, sightings are always reported, but no one ever reports not having sighted a cougar. The result is that even though they have never seen one, most people believe the woods are full of cougars.

It was because of doubts thus raised that we undertook in 1988 and 1990 two surveys of traditional customs in South China. The first was conducted in collaboration with Xiamen University and was largely confined to Southern Fukien. The second extended our coverage to Northern Fukien and to parts of Kuantung, Chekiang, Kiangsu, and Shanghai. It involved collaboration with the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and Fudan University as well as Xiamen University. The two surveys covered a total of 55 small communities in 31 widely scattered jurisdictions. In each community we interviewed fifty elderly women to determine how they had married and under what circumstances. In most of the communities our informants included all of the healthy and mentally alert women born before 1935.

The communities included in the two surveys were selected because one or another of our Chinese colleagues had the necessary contacts. Many are their natal places or the natal place of one of their students. Several are communities in which the researcher lived when he or she was sent down to the country after the failure of the Cultural Revolution. They are not a random sample, but they are certainly diverse. They include coastal communities linked to the world by sea-borne trade and mountain communities only accessible by steep stone paths. Although most of them are known by name only to their immediate neighbors, two have a fair claim to a place in history. One is Hu-shih in P’ing-ho hsien in southwestern Fukien. It is the home of the Taiwan’s famous Wu-feng Lin family. The other is Ku-t’ien is in southwestern Fukien. It was the site of the December 1929 meeting at which Mao Tse-tung persuaded his fellow revolutionaries of the wisdom of raising a peasant army and thereby emerged as the leader of the Chinese Communist Party.

Although the data collected includes information about many aspects of


local customs, we will here confine ourselves to reporting the relative frequency of major, minor, and uxorilocal marriages. We will only distinguish between the marriages of women born before and after 1925. This is necessary because many women born after 1925 did not marry until after the 1949 revolution. Thus there is the possibility that some who might have married in the minor fashion did not do so because of the marriage reform campaign.

The 36 communities covered in our first survey included three localities in each of twelve hsien. One surprising result was that the frequency of minor marriages varied markedly within hsien as well as between hsien. Among women born before 1925 the range was from 3.8 percent to 23.5 percent in An-chi hsien; 11.5 percent to 41.7 percent in Hua-an hsien; and 12.5 percent to 48.6 percent in P’ing-ho hsien. Thus it appears that the conditions that encouraged high frequencies of minor marriages were even more narrowly localized in Fukien than in Taiwan where we only find such sharp contrasts between the major regions of the island. What these conditions were is one of the many unanswered questions on our research agenda.

The important point for the moment is that minor marriages were common in many Fukienese communities. In 21 of the 36 surveyed communities minor marriages accounted for more than twenty percent of the marriages of women born before 1925, and in six of the 21 they accounted for more than forty percent of their marriages. In only six of the 36 communities did the percentage of minor marriages fall below ten percent, and in only one of the 36 did we fail to find a single minor marriage. Given, then, that minor marriages are often unreported because they are an unorthodox form of marriage, one must conclude that they were at least as common in southern Fukien as in Taiwan.

What, then, of northern Fukien and the other southern provinces? Taken together with the evidence already cited, the data from our second survey suggests that like southern Fukien and Taiwan, they also contained many communities in which raising a son’s wife was a popular option. In eleven of the 19 communities surveyed minor marriages accounted for more than twenty percent of the marriages of women born before 1925. In five of the 19 they accounted for more than thirty percent of all marriages, and in two of the 19 they accounted for more than fifty percent of all marriages. The number of women interviewed is small, but the conclusion is inescapable. Minor marriages were a prominent feature of the social landscape of South China. They were not a Taiwanese or a Taiwanese/Fukienese peculiarity. They were not as common in the southwestern provinces as in the southeastern provinces, but there were communities with high frequencies everywhere. Hill Gates’s 1992-93 survey of elderly Szechuanese women turned up one community – Le-chih in the eastern part of the province – where minor marriages accounted for 29.4 percent of all first marriages among women born before 1920.19
### Table 2 Relative Frequency of Major, Minor, and Uxorilocal Marriages
In Thirty-six Localities in Fukien
(Women Born Before 1935/Women Born Before 1925)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field site</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Percent major marriages</th>
<th>Percent minor marriages</th>
<th>Percent uxorilocal marriages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>An-ch’i hsien</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu-t’ou</td>
<td>49/34</td>
<td>67.3/67.6</td>
<td>22.4/23.5</td>
<td>10.2/8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch’eng-hsiang</td>
<td>48/18</td>
<td>79.2/66.7</td>
<td>14.6/22.2</td>
<td>6.2/11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch’ang-k’ang</td>
<td>49/26</td>
<td>92.3/87.8</td>
<td>6.1/3.8</td>
<td>6.1/3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hsien-you hsien</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hsia-fang</td>
<td>50/24</td>
<td>50.0/54.2</td>
<td>38.0/45.8</td>
<td>12.0/0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho-chu</td>
<td>50/32</td>
<td>48.0/50.0</td>
<td>36.0/28.1</td>
<td>16.0/21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho-p’ing</td>
<td>50/22</td>
<td>56.0/59.1</td>
<td>20.0/22.7</td>
<td>24.0/18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hua-an hsien</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hsia</td>
<td>50/36</td>
<td>48.0/41.7</td>
<td>34.0/41.7</td>
<td>18.0/16.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hsin-hsu</td>
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<td>70.6/57.7</td>
<td>5.8/11.5</td>
<td>23.5/30.8</td>
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<td>Ma-k’ang</td>
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<td>70.0/58.6</td>
<td>18.0/27.6</td>
<td>12.0/13.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ta-chia</td>
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<td>96.4/95.0</td>
<td>1.8/2.5</td>
<td>1.8/2.5</td>
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<td>Ch’ao-ke</td>
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<td>6.5/4.3</td>
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<td>Hsi-pei</td>
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<td>75.0/70.0</td>
<td>17.9/26.7</td>
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<td><strong>Nan-ching hsien</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ho-hsi</td>
<td>49/31</td>
<td>61.2/54.8</td>
<td>28.6/32.3</td>
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<td>50.0/51.4</td>
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<td>30.0/34.3</td>
<td>10.0/11.4</td>
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<td>34.7/34.6</td>
<td>8.0/3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>P’u-p’ing</td>
<td>48/28</td>
<td>68.8/67.9</td>
<td>12.5/10.7</td>
<td>18.8/21.4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hsin-t’ien</td>
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<td>42.0/40.5</td>
<td>48.0/48.6</td>
<td>10.0/10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field site</td>
<td>Number of women</td>
<td>Percent major marriages</td>
<td>Percent minor marriages</td>
<td>Percent uxorilocal marriages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>78.0/75.9</td>
<td>12.0/13.8</td>
<td>10.0/10.3</td>
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<td>30.0/30.6</td>
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<td>40.0/46.9</td>
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<td>Ta-yang</td>
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<td>Yen-t’ou</td>
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<td>75.5/78.8</td>
<td>22.6/18.2</td>
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<td>Ku-t’ien</td>
<td>50/32</td>
<td>82.0/84.4</td>
<td>18.0/15.6</td>
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We turn now to uxorilocal marriages. Although “calling in a husband” for a daughter was not an institutionalized option in North China and most Mandarin-speaking regions of the Southwest, it was an acceptable form of marriage in the rest of the country.\(^{20}\) A family with a daughter or an adopted daughter had a wide range of choices. They could adopt her husband and thereby assure that all of the children produced would belong to their own descent line. They could negotiate an arrangement that divided the children between their son-in-law’s line and their own. Or, if they had a son of their own and just needed additional labor, they could offer to forego their daughter’s brideprice in return for her husband’s assistance. In this case the husband would only live with his wife’s family for a few years and could claim all of his children for his own line.\(^{21}\)

Uxorilocal marriages were not as commonly noted by Western observers as minor marriages, probably because they did not involve such a striking departure from the human norm. They were, however, commonly noted by Chinese authors and particularly jurists and other officials responsible for settling civil disputes. The reason is apparent in the following two reports published in the *MHTP*. The first comes from P’u-t’ien hsien in northern Fukien, and the second from Chu-jung hsien east of Nanking.

In P’u-t’ien hsien seven or eight of every ten civil cases involve the uxorilocally married husbands of adopted daughters or adopted daughters-in-law. Whether they have children of their own or not, the common people often buy girls of another surname as daughters or daughters-in-law. When an adopted daughter comes of age, they select a man of the same or a different surname to serve as *chui-hsi* ['parasitical son-in-law'] or successor, depending on whether or not they have sons of their own (…) Whether he is an only son or not, a man whose family has agreed to an uxorilocal marriage is duty-bound to live with and support his wife’s family forever, obeying their orders and accepting their supervision. He has no right to interfere in household management or in the family’s estate. At present this custom is not only practiced in the countryside, but in towns and cities as well.\(^{22}\)

In Chu-jung hsien questions of succession are extremely complicated. People who have no male child usually bring in a son-in-law to act as their son. On entering the

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22. *MHTP*, 1576-77.
family the son-in-law changes his name, and a contract is written so there will be proof
(…) The practice seldom gives rise to litigation among families with little property, but
it is common among families with substantial property or when there is reason to be
dissatisfied with some aspect of the son-in-law’s behavior. In recent years eight or nine
out of every ten disputes over succession are of this nature. 23

23. mhtp, 1465-66.
For reasons Wolf has discussed in detail elsewhere, social surveys and censuses underestimate the frequency of uxorilocal marriages by a wide margin. The frequencies reported in Table 1 are exceptional in this regard because a man who married uxorilocally could not easily conceal his change of residence from the Japanese police. The table shows that while the frequency of uxorilocal marriages varied widely, they commonly constituted a substantial proportion of all first marriages. In only one of the fifteen Taiwanese communities for which we have evidence was the proportion less than ten percent, and in nine of the fifteen it approached or exceeded twenty percent. In the town of Ta-chia in central Taiwan uxorilocal marriages constituted an astounding 37.8% of all first marriages. The reason is probably related to the fact that this was a community in which most families were supported by women weaving baskets and panama hats.

The frequencies of uxorilocal marriages reported in tables 2 and 3 are far less reliable than those reported in table 1. The reason is simply that because uxorilocal marriages ran against the grain of the Chinese kinship system, they were considered disgraceful if not immoral. The disgrace could not be concealed when every change of residence had to be reported to the local police within ten days, but it could be easily concealed in an interview conducted twenty years after the fact by a stranger. Thus we cannot reasonably conclude that there were no uxorilocal marriages in nine of the 55 communities covered by our two surveys. The only safe conclusion is the one suggested by the fact that in 22 of the 55 communities uxorilocal marriages accounted for at least ten percent of all marriages. These figures say that it is very likely that uxorilocal were as common in the mainland provinces of South China as in Taiwan.

The very high frequency of uxorilocal marriages in Shui-an in Changp’u hsien requires special notice. In their own view and that of the Chinese government, the residents are not Han Chinese. They belong to an ethnic minority known officially as She. Thus the data from this locality does not say that uxorilocal marriages constituted half of all first marriages in some Chinese communities. It only says that uxorilocal marriages constituted half of all marriages in some communities in China. This may explain why uxorilocal marriages were common in some Chinese communities, but that is another matter. We cannot entertain here the possibility that many Han customs have non-Han origins.

The very low frequency of both minor and uxorilocal marriages in our three Hui-an field sites is more directly relevant to our thesis. The two sites with the lowest frequencies – T’a-chia and Ch’ao-ke – are both located in Hui-tung on the coastal side of the county. A fourth survey conducted by Chuang Ying-chang

two years after our joint effort indicates that their marriage preferences are typical of this area. Among fifty elderly women living in Tung Village he found no uxorilocal marriages and only two minor marriages.

Chuang’s work argues that the reason for the low frequency of minor and uxorilocal marriages in Hui-tung is that they have been excluded by a special form of major marriage – what has come to be called “delayed transfer marriage.” In delayed transfer marriage, as in major marriage, the bride was a nubile or nearly nubile young woman. The difference was that she did not go to live with her husband until four or five years after the wedding. She spent her wedding night with her husband but returned to her parents’ home within two or three days. After this she visited her husband periodically but conducted herself in such a way as to avoid becoming pregnant for at least three years. It is only when she become pregnant that she finally left her parental home and took up residence with her husband and his family.

Delayed transfer marriage was not a Hui-tung local product. In fact, its locus classicus was on the Canton Delta where it was the dominant form of marriage in an area with a population of several million people in the early 20th century. Janice Stockard’s study of delayed transfer marriage on the delta suggests that here, as in Hui-tung, a strong preference for this form of marriage excluded both minor and uxorilocal marriages. The reason is probably connected with female labor. In Hui-tung women worked in construction and did most of the farming, while on the delta they were involved in all the main stages of silk production. Stockard notes that “the sericultural heartland of the Canton Delta was wholly contained within the area in which delayed transfer marriages was practiced.”

Although we still know very little about marriage in many areas of China, the evidence now in hand is adequate to draw two conclusions. The first is that the Chinese cultural repertoire included many strikingly different forms of marriage. The second is that however exotic these forms of marriage may appear to foreigners, they were not rare, extra-legal forms like wife sale in 18th century England. Delayed transfer marriage appears to have been limited to two areas with a combined population of four or five million, but this was the least common of the forms of marriage we have introduced. Minor marriages were found everywhere and accounted for a large percentage of all marriages in South China. It could well be that in the 19th century a larger proportion of the world’s population married in the minor fashion than married in all of Europe’s churches.

It is not easy to say how many forms of marriage there were in China. We have distinguished three or four forms (depending on whether or not delayed transfer marriages are counted as major marriages), but it is easy to make a case for a much larger number. It all depends on one’s criteria. The most commonly employed criterion in the anthropological literature is post-marital residence. By this criterion, there were only two forms of marriage in China – virilocal and uxorilocal – because it was only in the rare case in which they had no surviving senior relatives that a young couple established an independent household at marriage.

Another commonly employed criterion is descent. In China descent was ideally patrilineal, which is to say that all the children should be assigned to their father’s lineage. But, as we have already seen, this ideal was frequently ignored in the case of uxorilocal marriages. Although the children of uxorilocal marriages sometimes took their descent from their father, they were commonly claimed by their mother’s line or divided between their parents’ lines. Thus, when we add descent as a criterion, we get at least three distinct forms of uxorilocal marriage. We say “at least” because there were numerous ways of dividing children between their mother’s and their father’s lines.

Although departures from the patrilineal ideal were most likely in marriages requiring uxorilocal residence, they also occurred under virilocal residence. Sometimes a woman’s parents only allowed her to marry out of their family on the condition that she return one or more of her children to her natal family. These children then took their descent from from their mother’s father rather from their own father. Consequently, taking account of descent as well as post-marital residence gives us two forms of virilocal marriage as well as three forms of uxorilocal marriage.

These are, however, only two of the criterion used to classify marriages and not necessarily the most important. In the case of China we have also have to take account of when a woman who married virilocally joined her husband’s family. This was not always on the day of their wedding as is commonly assumed. In the case of minor marriages it was ten to fifteen years before the wedding, and in the case of delayed transfer marriages, as long as five years after the wedding. In North China the timing of the transfer was contingent, depending primarily on the economic fortunes of the bride’s family. Having betrothed their daughter at an early age, parents could later send her to live with her fiancéé’s family if for some reason they could not afford to care for her. The girl might then to be raised by her future parents-in-law, or, if her natal family’s circumstances improved, she might return home until she was old enough to marry.

28. See Wolf and Huang, Marriage and Adoption in China, 95.
Although women in minor and delayed transfer marriages might occasion-ally have returned a child to their parents, we will ignore this possibility. Thus, the addition of the timing of the bride’s change of residence to our other two criteria gives us at least eight distinct forms of marriage, five virilocal forms and three uxorilocal forms. And it would not be difficult to add to this number. We would not even have to extend our analysis to include concubinage and second marriages. A case could be made for distinguishing among marriages in terms of the amount and kind of wealth transferred between the couple’s families. Hill Gates has shown that this varied sharply from one region of the country to another. There were also regional differences in customary attitudes towards the relative age of the bride and groom. In most of China the preference was for a bride who was several years younger than the groom, but the opposite was true in large parts of the North China Plain and the Shantung Peninsula. In this part of the country families who were wealthy enough to arrange marriages to suit their preferences commonly matched eleven- to twelve-year-old boys with sixteen- to seventeen-year-old girls. One report in the Shantung section of the notes that in Li-ch’eng hsien, “Most people marry early. In some cases the women is six or even seven or eight years older than the man.” Another notes that Shou-kuang, Ning-yang, Ch’ing-ch’eng, and Chu-yeh hsien, also in Shantung, “the normal age at marriage for men is fourteen or fifteen,” while “the majority of all women marry at around twenty.”

But despite this great diversity of forms, all Chinese marriages conformed to one inviolate principle. Post-marital residence could be virilocal or uxorilocal; the children could take their descent from their father or from their mother; and the bride could be transferred years before the wedding or years after. All these and many other arrangements were possible, but whatever the arrangements were, they were made by the couple’s parents. It was the parents who decided where the couple was to live, where the children were to take their descent, and when the bride was to leave her natal home. No man or woman had the right to arrange his or her own marriage. The legal historian T’ung-tsu Ch’u writes:

Under the law of T’ang, Sung, Ming, and Ch’ing, a man, even though he was an adult, held an official position, ran a business far from home, did not have the right to marry without his parents’ consent.

The punishment for doing so was 80 to 100 blows of the heavy bamboo.

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32. *MHTP*, 1393.
We guess, then, that if John Hajnal had been Chinese he would not have made late age at marriage and a high celibacy rate the only defining characteristics of the European marriage pattern. He would have been forcibly struck by the fact that young Europeans usually arranged their own marriages and sometimes did so against their parents’ wishes. And he would probably have been appalled to discover that secret marriages were accepted as legitimate by the the ultimate moral authority in Europe – the Catholic Church. He would, then, have seen that as a consequence marriage in Europe was a simple institution. It did not offer people the possibility of arranging their children’s marriages in such a way as to adapt family composition to changing circumstances. Europeans could not dispose of girls they did not want by giving them away as t’ung-yang-hsi (although they could and did abandon them as infants). They could not make up for their failure to raise a son by adopting their daughter’s husband. They could not add to their labor force by keeping a married daughter at home or arranging for her husband to reside uxorilocally. There was no possibility at all of negotiating an arrangement by which the children of a marriage were distributed between two descent lines. In sum, there were no institutionalized alternatives and thus very little room for strategizing. Only the European royalty could use their children marriages to effect strategic goals. All commoner parents could do was to throw their children into the marriage market and hope for the best.

We suggest, then, that coming from a society in which parents deployed their children to serve their own best interests, a Chinese Hajnal would have made lack of parental control over marriage one of the salient features of the European marriage pattern. This would have been a significant amendment because it would have altered the course of the debate stimulated by Hajnal’s writing. Instead of concentrating on the conditions that hindered or enhanced young people’s chance of marrying, scholars would have sought the conditions that made it possible for parents to dictate how their children married. This would have led away from the Malthusian concern with the balance between population and resources to a more Marxian concern with forms of domination. A focal interest would have been the differences between the goals of the Catholic Church and the Confucian state.
Servants and service in Eurasia

Hill Gates & François Hendrickx
**Introduction**

In parts of pre-industrial Europe, long-term, premarital wage labor outside the natal home was common, even normative, for both sexes. In East Asia too, unmarried children sometimes lived and worked in other households to earn wages or relieve their parents of the costs of supporting them. Servanthood among the young and unmarried—even of girls and women—was thus not limited to northwestern Europe, the region that John Hajnal identified as the heartland of the European marriage regime, and Peter Laslett distinguished as practicing life-cycle labor service.¹

The principal difference between northwest Europe and “the rest” in the allocation of youthful labor to extra-familial wage work was in its timing. European boys and girls entered service just as their reproductive period began, in their early to mid ‘teens, delaying marriage for as much as a decade, or not marrying at all. In China, children who lived and worked away from home began at much younger ages, at about six or seven. At puberty, ideally, they left their employer’s household to be married by parental fiat. As other papers in this volume suggest (e.g. Viazzo, Saito), some Eurasian societies presented less sharp contrasts in timing of work and marriage. This paper will blur but not eliminate Hajnal’s strong West/East dichotomy between the marriage regime/youthful labor complexes at each extreme of Eurasia by examining service in various regions of Europe, in China, and in Japan.

**Life-cycle service in northwest Europe**

Servants have long been integral to European culture, a predictable correlate of ever-increasing commoditization. Voluntary service in Europe may have developed from the Greek and Roman traditions of slavery. Service in husbandry, crafts and household maintenance have been are common in Europe at least since early modern times, and possibly since the Carolingian age.² Other scholars have agreed with this timing, linking the European marriage pattern with a

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radical cultural break from antiquity in the centuries just before 1000 BP. In Eastern Europe, the persistence of feudal structures and law caused serfdom, half way between voluntary service and slavery, to endure until well into the nineteenth century.

In 1977, Peter Laslett coined the phrase “life-cycle service” to refer to “young, unmarried persons - indeed, sexually mature persons waiting to be married, for four-fifths of the male servants and two-thirds of the female servants were under the prevalent marriage age.” He also concluded that service in this form was an exclusively northwest European phenomenon, and one not necessarily restricted to the lower social classes. In a 1982/3 article, John Hajnal expanded and further substantiated the concept of life-cycle service:
1. [life-cycle] Servants were numerous, apparently always constituting at least 6 percent, and usually over 10 percent, of the total population.
2. Almost all servants were unmarried and most of them were young (usually between 10 and 30 years of age).
3. A substantial proportion of young people of both sexes were servants at some stage in their lives.
4. Most servants were not primarily engaged in domestic service, but were part of the work force of their master’s farm or craft enterprise.
5. Servants lived as members of their master’s household.
6. Most servants were members of their master’s household by contract for a limited period.
7. There was no assumption that a servant, as a result of being in service, would necessarily be socially inferior to his or her master. The great majority of servants eventually married and ceased being servants. Their social class before service (i.e., usually the class of their parents) and their social class after service could be the same as their master’s.

Servanthood was remarkably common in early modern Europe: of unmarried people between 15 and 30 years, a large majority of all persons had at some time worked as a servant, between six and ten per cent of the population at any time.

In Iceland, 33 per cent of all men between 15 and 19, and 39 per cent of all men between 20 and 24 were servants in 1729. For women, these shares were 34 and 44 per cent, respectively. Similar proportions are claimed for Norway in 1801, Flanders in 1814 and English villages between 1599 and 1796. Between 43 and 77 per cent of all servants in Southeast Europe were between 15 and 29 years of age. The fact that these data were taken from cross-sectional sources underestimates the real proportion of servants in the various populations.

Hajnal focused on the circumstances in which servanthood could blossom, and looked at the demographic consequences it may have had for nuptiality, fertility, and hence population growth. Northwest European expectations that newly-weds set up new households obliged potential partners to amass the necessary resources prior to marriage. Even those who inherited property might need or want to supplement it with savings. Servanthood paid wages, and also kept many adolescents occupied while waiting for marriage. For centuries, this productive/reproductive timing effectively checked early marriage for both men and women. Life-cycle service was “uniquely European and has disappeared;” the linked northwest European patterns of service and marriage were found in no other part of Europe or the world.

Hajnal supposed that “too close a correlation between variations in the incidence of late marriage and of service must not be expected.” He tried to determine the effectiveness of service as a delay mechanism for marriage from age structures as well. In three Iceland county censuses for 1703 and 1729, the


12. Hajnal’s implications of causality are not always clear. In non-Northwestern European societies, early age at marriage is given as one of the causes of the absence of servanthood, while in Northwest Europe, the presence of service appears to be one of the causes of late marriage. Hajnal, “Two kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation System”, 473.

share of servants to population decreased from 19 to 17 per cent. At the same
time, economic disaster and epidemics reduced the population by some 20 per
cent, rejuvenating the age structure and shortening the birth intervals. He inter-
preted this increase at the bottom of the age pyramid as the consequence of a
drastic fall in average age at first marriage. Similarly, he compared age at mar-
rriage in England in the periods 1650-99 and 1750-99. It fell by around 1.5 years
for both men and women, and the numbers of servants also may have
decreased.\textsuperscript{14}

**English life-cycle service: the type case**

Ann Kussmaul’s work on agricultural servants in early modern England sup-
ports and expands Hajnal’s contribution through its ethnographic richness and
analysis of temporal change on Europe’s western extreme.\textsuperscript{15} A typical servant
career in husbandry began in early teens or even younger, depending on local
custom or legislation.\textsuperscript{16} Youths first learned simple jobs, gaining status, respon-
sibility, and income with age and experience.\textsuperscript{17} After a year, many changed
employers. In Tetney, Lincolnshire, 68 per cent of the servants moved elsewhere
after their first year; on a farm in Berkshire this share was 80 per cent. Indirect
calculations for other areas hint at similar proportions.\textsuperscript{18} Moving allowed ser-
vants to gain experience and learn new skills, but was sometimes also induced
by the employer seeking to evade claims on parish poor relief that were valid
after a years residence.\textsuperscript{19} Throughout Northwest Europe, servant contracts ended
and new ones began on regionally fixed dates. This yearly reshuffle of employ-
ment spurred much migration.\textsuperscript{20} After a number of years as a servant, many
men and women left service and married, moves often precipitated by a preg-
nancy.\textsuperscript{21} A couple might buy a small farm with the savings of two persons from
ten years of service, assuming that they had saved two-thirds of their income. But

\textsuperscript{14} Hajnal, “Two kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation System”, 478-81. See also Kussmaul, *Servants in
husbandry*, chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{15} Hajnal, “Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system”, 489, note 53.

Gesindestatistik 1810 bis 1861”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* XIX (1979), 189-229, 201.

\textsuperscript{17} Kussmaul, Servants in husbandry, 34-5; Tenfelde, “Ländliches Gesinde in Preußen.”, 222.

\textsuperscript{18} Kussmaul, *Servants in husbandry*, 51-5.

\textsuperscript{19} Kussmaul, *Servants in husbandry*, 122-4

\textsuperscript{20} Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans. Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington, Indiana Univer-
1810 bis 1861”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* XIX (1979), 189-229, 222. Kussmaul, “The Ambiguous mobility of
farm servants”.

\textsuperscript{21} Kussmaul, *Servants in husbandry*, 83.
marriage involved a considerable step downwards on the social ladder, for the
best jobs on large farms were often reserved for servants. Newly-wed former ser-
vants might end as day laborers, or, at best, as cottagers.

On the basis of scattered data, Kussmaul estimates a median age at leav-
ing service of around 20 years, although 20 per cent of all service-leavers were
older than 25. Establishing the length of service is even more problematic: or 81
well-documented cases, the median duration was six years, but almost 25 per
cent had served at least ten years, and 11 per cent had served a minimum of four-
teen.\textsuperscript{22}

This system enabled farmers, craftsmen, and tradesmen to “compose
their household labour force independently of the numbers and skills of their
children; a productive household could survive the death of any of its members;
parents could send children they could not support into the households of oth-
ers.”\textsuperscript{23} Service was thus a means to match labor supply and demand in the life
cycle of the employer’s and the employee’s households. And, she concludes, the
family was “redefined. .... The institution of service was a form of ex post facto
family planning”\textsuperscript{24} Adolescent kin were extruded into an early independence to
be more frictionlessly redistributed in an ever-deepening labor market.

The share of servants in the total population in a rural region depended on
several factors. Kussmaul emphasized the importance of local ecology (arable
versus pastoral, with their different workloads and seasonal rhythms). Economic
growth or tightening was also important: in times of rising real wages, it was
generally cheaper for farmers to hire servants than to hire day laborers, and vice
versa. Population growth too influenced employment opportunities for rural ser-
vants. When population decreased, farmers hired servants to ensure an ample
and reliable supply of labor. Kussmaul documents two major cycles in English
rural service that connect the practice to the wider economy. The second, more
relevant here, began around 1740 and ended in mid 19th century. As agricultur-
al commercialization proceeded, rural service in southeast England\textsuperscript{25} rapidly
disappeared; in the north and west, stock-raising slowed the decline in numbers
of servants while, simultaneously, increasing industrialization offered them
alternative employment.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{22} Kussmaul, \textit{Servants in husbandry}, 79-80.
\textsuperscript{23} Kussmaul, \textit{Servants in husbandry}, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{24} Kussmaul, \textit{Servants in husbandry}, 24, 26.
\textsuperscript{25} Kussmaul, \textit{Servants in husbandry}, ch. 6. For a critical assessment of her results concerning the two major
cycles and in particular the end of the last cycle, see: A.J. Gritt, “The census and the servant: a reassessment of
the decline and distribution of farm service in early nineteenth-century England”, \textit{Economic History Review} LIII
(2000), 84-106; Donald Woodward, “Early modern servants revisited”, \textit{Agricultural History Review} 48 (2000),
141-150.
While the type of agriculture, economic development, and population growth influenced the specific appearance of service in a region and over time, service itself, through its influence on household composition, marriage behavior, and procreation, in turn influenced population growth and economic development: neolocality and late marriage stimulated the demand for small farms or viable plots for servants who married and became day laborers. Family economies that included servants were cushioned against sudden deaths among kin. This may have slowed or precluded replacement fertility, and since the institution of service favored late marriage, the entire population growth in a region may have been slowed by it.  

Urban life-cycle servants

“Life-cycle service” generally refers to rural production, especially in agriculture and the processing of farm products. Metropolitan labor markets were differently structured and much more diversified than those of the countryside. In early modern Europe, expanding urban-based crafts, trade, and industry demanded more and more specific types of labor, many of which do not count as service in Hajnal’s sense. Our usage of the term is more expansive. In addition to typically rural production service, we also consider apprentices (generally urban) and domestic servants (typically urban) as life-cycle servants. Changes in the shares of the youthful labor force of these three types can inform us about broader currents of economic change. They also compare more naturally with the experiences of young servants in China, to be examined below, than does the rural life-cycle service that is unique to Northwest Europe.

Apprentices in crafts and trade, young, unmarried, and living in their master’s households, stood lower in legal and economic position than servants in husbandry. The latter received wages for their work, the former (or their parents) had to pay to be tutored in a trade, so apprentices did not contribute to the family income pool, but drew from it. Moreover, apprentices usually stayed in

the master’s household longer than annually-mobile farm servants. Apprentices were recompensed by their acquisition of skills and networks of potential colleagues, suppliers, and clients rather than with immediate wages.\textsuperscript{29} They made up a significant proportion of all unmarried youths working in cities and towns.

Their number, however, must have been exceeded by that of house servants. In London, the share of domestic servants in the total population was (perhaps over-) estimated to have grown from 7.7 per cent in 1767 to 22.2 per cent in 1796.\textsuperscript{30} In 1768, 9 per cent of the population of Milan were house servants, in 1789 in Florence, their share was 18.8 per cent. In 1804, 10.5 per cent of the population of St. Petersburg were servants, in Venice, 9.3 per cent in 1805. Similar figures are available for German cities: Hamburg, for instance, had a share of 11.1 per cent of servants in 1764. In 1791, female domestic servants alone formed between 12.5 and 15 per cent of the total population.\textsuperscript{31} Domestic servants comprised 7.1 per cent of the total population of England in 1851, 7.9 per cent in 1861, 8.8 per cent in 1871, and then decreased to 7.0 per cent in 1891.\textsuperscript{32} In selected English and Welsh towns, the ratio of female servants to total female population in 1696 ranged from 11.7 per cent in Bristol to 22.3 per cent in Southampton; in 1851, 12.9 per cent in Lichfield and 21.8 per cent in Bristol.\textsuperscript{33}

The richer and more important the city, the larger was the proportion of male and female domestics. Leonard Schwarz shows that in 1780, the farther away a community was from London, the smaller the share of its population that employed manservants.\textsuperscript{34} The ratio of female domestics did not necessarily fall at an equal rate, but with growing distance from the metropolis, potential employment chances for domestics decreased. In the countryside, their role was usually taken over by servants in husbandry, who had tasks in both household and production.

Domestics in the cities shared a number of important characteristics with their rural colleagues: as a rule, they were life-cycle servants, young, unmarried,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Kussmaul, \textit{Servants in husbandry}, 4, 49ff. Kussmaul, “The Ambiguous Mobility of Farm Servants”.
\item Rolf Engelsing, \textit{Zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Mittel- und Unterschichten} (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 243-5.
\item Schwarz, “English servants and their employers”, 245.
\item Schwarz, “English servants and their employers”, 248.
\item Schwarz, “English servants and their employers”, 244.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
with contracts of limited duration. The main demographic difference between urban domestic servants and servants in husbandry was in the sex composition of these two groups: more men to women in the countryside, more women to men in the cities, with the urban pattern growing more emphatic from the later part of the eighteenth century onward.\textsuperscript{35} Rapidly increasing urbanization and the growth of wealth and work opportunities in the cities combined with a rural shift from servants to day laborers pushed and pulled young women cityward to try their luck as domestics.\textsuperscript{36}

Like their rural peers, urban maids, cooks, and laundresses were absent from the marriage market for the duration of their contract. The feminization of urban service and the decreasing participation of women in rural service marked a shift in the location of women’s work, not necessarily a change in their role in the European marriage pattern. They still spent a significant part of their fertile life span unavailable for marriage and procreation. Although the share of all male servants decreased from the second half of the eighteenth century in the commercializing regions of Northwest Europe, the ongoing absence of women from the marriage market contributed at least in part to the continuation of the European marriage pattern.\textsuperscript{37}

Life-cycle service variation in Northwest, South, and East Europe

England, Iceland, western Germany, Flanders, and the Netherlands provide examples of an ideal Northwest European marriage/service pattern. Still, detailed studies can call aspects of the model into question,\textsuperscript{38} although the difficulty of linking persons known through marriage certificates and those who appear in labor contracts seriously impedes such research. Francois Hendrickx’s work on 19th century Netherlands population registers, which enable a life-course perspective, indicates that a term of service on age at first marriage sometimes hastened rather than delayed marriage. In at least one Dutch region, menservants married on average at 29.7, and women at 27.8, while men who had not been servants married on average at 30.4, women at 28.5. These results,


\textsuperscript{37} In the regions of Northwest Europe which increasingly shifted to more concentrated and commercialized agriculture from the middle of the eighteenth century, the share of rural male servants began to decrease. They were rapidly replaced by day laborers, who were usually married and had a household to support. Kussmaul, \textit{Servants in husbandry}, 120ff.

calculated from a sample from the 19th century population registers of Borne in the province of Overijssel, are suggestive rather than definitive. They apply only to persons who at some point worked in the community; outmigrants are therefore not included (either among servants or non-servants). Moreover, Borne was part of the heartland of proto-industry in the Netherlands, offering much alternative employment, and making the area an exception to what are generally known as servant-employing regions. Some Borne people even entered marriage as servants. Their ages at marriage are what one would expect with relation to those who never entered service at all: on average, men who married as servants, did so at 35.6 years, women at 31.3 years.

Looking beyond Borne, in the 19th century between 32 and 52 per cent of all young Dutch women spent a part of their youth as servants. Their median age at entry into service was between 18 and 20 years and their median age at marriage was 24.9 years. Women who had not been servants married at 24.3 years, a difference of six months. Similarly, in the province of Overijssel, where women who married after service did so on average at the age of 25.8, women who were not in service at their marriage on average married at 25.1 years. The differences in age at marriage between servants and non-servants in the nineteenth-century Netherlands are therefore rather small. If non-servant women married only six to seven months earlier than servants, the effects of this delay on fertility and population growth may have been trivial compared to those of other influences, such as infant mortality. These results stand against Hajnal’s (and Kussmaul’s) hypothesis that servanthood was a structural mechanism that postponed marriage, and hence served to check population growth.

**European variations on the Northwest Europe pattern**

More striking differences from Europe’s northwest marriage regime are now well documented. The farther south and east we go, the more European realities and the Hajnal model diverge. Toward the south, similarities to core Mediterranean patterns of work and marriage for women are strong. In the south of France, Spain, and Italy, we find hardly any servants in the Hajnalian sense of the word, although we do find domestics.

Southern Europe resists simple categorization, but it is reasonably well exemplified by Tuscany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There, powerful son preference, bondservanthood of girls as young as eight, slavery, exten-

39. François M.M. Hendrickx, ‘In order not to fall into poverty’. Production and reproduction in the transition from proto-industry to factory industry in Borne and Wierden (the Netherlands), 1800-1900 (Amsterdam, 115G, 1997).
40. Bras, Zeeuwse meiden, 13.
41. Bras, Zeeuwse meiden, 120.
42. Data from the Overijssel marriage registers, courtesy of the Historisch Centrum Overijssel.
sive wet-nursing among even the moderately prosperous, and frequent child abandonment added great complexity to work and mothering by Tuscan women. Male household heads arranged marriage and even wet-nursing in a vigorous market for the “healthy” milk of newly-delivered mothers. Social “values were those of the lineage: according to them, the children born of a couple belonged to the father and his kinship group. Such values minimized female roles and female contributions to the family group.” The service of the ubiquitous wet-nurses was tied to life-cycle events, but merged reproductivity and wage-work in precisely the way that the Northeast European pattern precluded. In Europe’s south, we may generalize that the combination of patrivirilocal marriage and patriarchal household authority in conjunction with the specific economic and social constellation of these regions lessened the need for a period as a life-course servant, at least in part, and at least for male children.

West-to-East variation in marriage regimes across Europe is perhaps more subtle than the relatively clear North-to-South dichotomy. Prior to 1810, Prussia and other eastern parts of the German Empire had an institution referred to as “Gesindezwang”, or forced service, which Klaus Tenfelde dates back to the seventeenth century. This remnant of feudal structures gave landlords the right to coerce the children of their tenants into service for the duration of three to six years. As in core Northwest regions, these servants were young and unmarried, and were employed both in domestic and productive tasks, but they were bound to their master’s farm and were not free to leave service on their own initiative. Living conditions were worse than in the west, and wages were lower or even non-existent. Servants were bound by many strictly enforced rules and regula-


46. Da Molin (in “Family forms and domestic service”) and Hendrickx and Viazzo (this volume observe that family forms in Southern Europe were much more diversified than Hajnal and Laslett were aware of.)
tions laid down in a separate body of law. This described in detail the servants’
duties, but was much less clear about their rights. How very different this was
from the situation in the England, where “service in husbandry was a private
institution, practiced within the farmer’s family, defined not by law but by cus-
tom.”

Forced service was legally abolished to a large extent in the Prussia in
1810, but in practice, it took much longer to change the position of the servants:
“Considering the »»strong nerved nature«« of the East Elbian nobility, it may be
assumed that the situation of servants developed only gradually for the better in
this period of legal and structural change.” The duration of the forced service
contracts was limited to one year, but could be renewed. Termination of the con-
tact required a notice of three months in advance for the party taking the initia-
tive to end the contract. However, the employer was now obliged to take care of
his servants in case of a work-related accident or illness even after the end of the
contract. Maximum wages were established, as was a minimum age for servants
of 14 years. Still, servants remained in the custody of their lords, and daughters
in service remained in the custody of their fathers even after reaching legal age.

Western Germany resembled England much more closely. Servanthood
was officially regulated in legislation, but the service law introduced in 1844 was
much shorter and more liberal than the legislation in Prussia. In the 19th and
20th centuries, wages showed a clear decline from west to east. In 1914, domes-
tics in Halle/Saale earned on average 209 marks, while domestics in Frankfurt
Main earned almost double that amount at 407 marks. The same was true with
respect to food and lodging: the servant’s situation gradually deteriorated from
west to east.

Tenfelde attributes the worsening of labor conditions from west to east as
a consequence of a structural labor shortage in the eastern territories. Small
scale farming dominated in Northwest Europe, while in the Eastelbian areas,
farming was largely arable, a large-scale, commercial enterprise with less elastic
labor demand, particularly in the harvest season. Landlords, fearing labor short-
ages, imposed stringent regimes on their workforce to ensure an adequate and
permanent supply of labor. Moreover, in the early 19th century, western Ger-

Gutsadels darf angenommen werden, dass sich die Verhältnisse des Gesindes in dieser Phase rechtlichen und
strukturellen Wandels nur zögernd zum Besseren entwickelten.”
50. Pierenkemper, »»Dienstbotenfrage«« und Dienstmädchenarbeitsmarkt”, 194.
many (especially along the river Ruhr) started to industrialize at an ever quicker pace, creating alternative employment opportunities and forcing landlords into competition with industry over the supply of labor. Alternative employment in industry was largely missing in East Prussia, putting laborers into a relatively poor bargaining position.

In Austria, Mitterauer observed all the classic characteristics of the servant model as described by Hajnal and Kussmaul. But since he studied service in conjunction with the family life cycle, he found a number of interesting interactions between servants and family members or kin. One concept he introduces is that of the “Rollenenerganzungszwang” or forced role supplementation. A household that in view of its economic needs is short of labor takes in one or more outsiders to balance its needs and supply. Frequently, this new person in the household will be a servant, but in other cases, it may be a wife, a husband or a relative who performs in large parts the functions a servant would otherwise take up. This close similarity in the function of servants and kin points out that these are meant to be long-term relationships, and implies that in-marrying wives, husbands, adoptees, and the like remained firmly under the authority of parents, household heads, or even feudal superiors. Such authority was better supported by state kinship policy and local tenurial regulations in East than in West Europe. Hermann Rebel provides a striking analysis of this process in his study of the bureaucratization of property and family relations in early Habsburg times when “the heads of households became in effect a new class of bureaucrats... responsible for their ‘houses’ and subject to bureaucratically formulated and dispersed rules and regulations.” Where many agrarian households owned no land, Austrian servants were generally permanent, not life-cycle wage-workers, in a “functional continuum that runs from childhood to servant and lodger status.”

Mitterauer suggests a close connection between farm size and the number of servants per household. Farmers and cottars who do not own or lease a full farm, but have to make do with significantly less, will not have servants, but will instead send out their children to work elsewhere. There was, therefore, in his words, a symbiotic relationship between cottars and laborers on the one hand, and full-size farmers on the other, which formed an essential part of the local,

regional or even inter-regional social fabric.\textsuperscript{56} For small farms, this meant that the size of the operation did not grow beyond what could be handled by the farmer and his wife, with some help in harvest season. Adult children were seldom present in these households, and the children were sent out to work elsewhere as soon as possible, but as a rule not before the age of twelve.\textsuperscript{57} In general, the number of children below the age of fifteen residing in their own households, declined with the social and economic class of the parents.\textsuperscript{58}

Kin and servants were not interchangeable: on full-scale Austrian farms with numerous children, more children remained in the household than there were servants when no or few children were present.\textsuperscript{59} The number of adolescent children in a household is therefore an important indicator for the presence (or absence) of servants.\textsuperscript{60} From this, we may assume that children could be worked less strenuously than servants.

In the Baltic area, the situation of servants, at least in agriculture, differed significantly from that in England, the Low Countries and the western part of Germany. This was in no small part a consequence of the presence of serfdom in this area, as well as in Eastern Europe and Russia.\textsuperscript{61} Here, servants circulated between farms, and as a rule remained servants throughout their lives. They were therefore often married.\textsuperscript{62} This was not the case in Scandinavia. A sample taken from the Norwegian population census of 1801 shows that in Norway, only around 4.5 per cent of the total number of servants was married.\textsuperscript{63} Polish conditions resembled those of Western Europe: supernumerary children were sent out to work elsewhere as unmarried servants, or, if a household was short of

\textsuperscript{56} The symbiosis between lower and higher agrarian classes could be extended to a regional or even inter-regional level, for instance in the case of seasonal migration, when young people traveled around to do seasonal labor elsewhere, often many miles away. Page Moch, \textit{Moving Europeans}, 40-3: 76-88; 119-22; Mitterauer, “Formen ländlicher Familienwirtschaft”, 255-6.

\textsuperscript{57} Mitterauer, “Formen ländlicher Familienwirtschaft”, 302.

\textsuperscript{58} Mitterauer, “Formen ländlicher Familienwirtschaft”, 298-9.

\textsuperscript{59} Mitterauer, “Formen ländlicher Familienwirtschaft”, 271.

\textsuperscript{60} See also: Lutz K. Berkner, “The stem family and the development cycle of the peasant household. An eighteenth-century Austrian example”, \textit{American Historical Review} \textit{77} (1972), 398-418.


\textsuperscript{63} Data courtesy of the Digitalarkivet, National Archives of Norway.
labor, children or adolescents were taken in as servants. However, contrary to the situation in the West, a coercive component, rooted in the feudal background of the region, may have limited the freedom to change employers as it did in Russia and the Baltic.\textsuperscript{64}

**Political-economic contexts for life-cycle service**

On the continent as in England, work in industry and protoindustry offered employment alternatives to service.\textsuperscript{65} In domestic industry, resident family labor produced for market and/or for use. Weaving, ironwork and leather-making occupied the agricultural slack season leaving labor available for harvesting in summer. Domestic industry thus was mainly found in areas with small scale arable or mixed farming where the demand for labor in agriculture varied considerably over the year. Children of “servant age” often assisted their parents, directly supporting their own families, or went to local wage work during the harvest instead of spending time as life-cycle servants. In such regions, farmers seeking long-term servants had to compete for labor with alternative employment opportunities. Kussmaul’s argument for service as an ex post facto household planning strategy may be as valid for protoindustry as for farming.

No research has yet been done to show how employment in domestic industry may have been used as an alternative to servanthood. If it were found that in proto-industrial areas fewer adolescents worked as servants, it would still be hard to attribute this solely to the presence of domestic industry. Domestic industries often developed in a quite specific economic, social and geophysical environments (or eco-types), whereas commercial agriculture created different eco-types. Structural differences in population growth and long-term economic change also affected the demand for life-cycle servants.

A second alternative to service for surplus family labor was short-term agricultural wage work for children. This increased in the course of the nineteenth century, specially in areas where commercial agriculture expanded, and day laborers replaced servants. The role of adolescents in day laboring was different from that of adults by the simple fact that the youngsters, in view of their age, lacked the skills and the physical abilities of adults.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, service in husbandry had almost disappeared across Northwestern Europe, the result of radical changes in


\textsuperscript{65} Marcus Cerman and Sheilagh C. Ogilvie (eds.), *European Proto-industrialization* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), 1996.
In the course of the 19th century, agriculture became more and more specialized and mechanized, reducing the demand for general services at the farm, and increasing the demand for wage labor. At the same time, as we have seen in Germany, industrialization created alternative employment, often with better wages than could be earned in service, and with more flexible contracts. This led to a decreasing supply of young adult labor.

A third alternative to rural service, domestic service seems to have kept its position for longer, and in fact may have expanded over the last half of the nineteenth century with the growth of cities and their elites and middle classes. Here, too, the accelerating pace of industrialization and trade left its marks and led to increasing wealth, creating demand for domestic labor. A growing flow of migrants from rural to urban areas, mostly young girls, met this demand.

The effects of commercialization long preceded industrialization, however. As markets ratcheted up in early modern times, the European family was redefined along with European relations of production. Northwest Europeans evolved the specialized form of wage labor—life-cycle service—to solve the problem of household labor/resource balance as families cycled through low and high dependency ratios. Efficient for allocating labor to capital, it inevitably worked against parental authority.

This perspective on the function of life-cycle service differs from that of a “niche-seeking” argument that focuses on the agency of adolescents themselves. The latter stresses individual action and neolocal nuclear families, while the former more readily accommodates household production units and the overlapping of generations. As we approach comparison with Chinese deployment of youthful labor, an aspect of Europe’s changing political economy deserves special mention: Northwestern Europe’s remarkable cultural emphasis on individuals as social atoms. Like Hajnal, we assume that life-cycle service necessarily entailed considerable economic independence and freedom for youth from their mid-teens forward.

How free, in fact, were young Northwest Europeans to make their own marriage and career choices? Historians have documented considerable erosion from mediaeval to very recent times of the political economic powers of girls and women. (Over the same period, we note without exploring that men and boys

arguably came to have greater freedom through the expanding public role of ordinary (male) citizens.) To ask “How free?” European youth were is meaningless without context: Free compared to what? Compared with the choices available to Chinese girls and women outlined below, women of northwest Europe had remarkable latitude, even taking into account the creeping limitations to which many sources attest. They had more support for voluntary marriage than their counterparts in parts of Italy and Eastern Europe, as we have seen. Was their choice of employer also free? Parents naturally exercised influence, but literary and anecdotal sources suggest that it diminished with increasing age and economic independence. A valuable description of English servant life in the last quarter of the eighteenth century preserved a “romantic but perfectly true narrative” showing Margaret Catchpole, a Suffolk girl, following a Hajnalian career of multiple servant employments, beginning in her mid teens as a dairymaid. Never limited by her father in her choices, she pursued opportunities shrewdly and autonomously, and was esteemed for her competence and initiative.

The social power of young adults was further bolstered by the Northwest European interpretation of Christianity, requiring personal consent to marriage. Where conflict arose between the parent-child and the husband-wife relationship, regional religion favored the latter: “A man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife.” Paul Klep (this volume) suggests that young people internalized the desire for a period of youthful autonomy before taking up the responsibilities of marriage. Mixed sex festivals and rituals, spinning parties with serenading beaux, and unsupervised camping in the summer pastures may have partially compensated for their years of sexual frustration. The possibility that leaving service for marriage into cotter or day labor life was a demotion in local career terms, a further incentive for deliberate delay.

Whether a relative “freedom” for youth and women was a preexisting regional value or the evolving outcome of an adaptation to efficient labor use is beyond our competence to answer. These factors had important implications for the European transition to capitalism, however. Perhaps forced by markets to rationalize their use of labor, Northwestern households loosened gender and intergenerational controls that may have been weak to begin with. Young adults

69. Richard Cobbold, The History of Margaret Catchpole, A Suffolk Girl. (London: Oxford University Press, 1931 [1845]. Cobbold’s knowledge of Margaret’s life came from his own and his mother’s memories and from letters written to his mother, who had been Margaret’s employer and patron. “[M]ost of the facts recorded were matters of public notoriety at the time of their occurrence,” observed Clement Shorter, Rector of Wortham, in his 1907 preface.

were both pushed and pulled to choose work and marital partners independently of the needs of their natal households. And wage labor played a normal part in individual and family life histories. Niche-seeking and efficient labor allocation may have coevolved.

**China, an Eastern extreme**

Comparisons between European and Chinese patterns of service are baroquely complicated by fundamental structural differences between their political economies, and in their distinctive attitudes toward state supervision of kinship and marriage. Parents were mandated by the state to legitimate the residence and marriage of their children, and to allocate their labor as they saw fit. In principle and generally in fact, women remained under the authority of father, husband, or son throughout life; sons remained under their parents’ authority until both died. As a growing body of research makes plain, the state took an active interest in these matters, strongly supporting parental rights.

In China, despite the pressure of entrenched markets for capital, labor, and commodities, the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911) consistently used their power to maintain and manage ethnic, gender, and class status differences. Later dynasts deliberately narrowed the status hierarchy, but enforced the principle that persons in different statuses were legally treated differently. Servile status among rural producers disappeared, but a “mean” class at the bottom, a class of upper-status degree-holders who staffed the bureaucracy, and a large Imperial household remained differentiated from the now extremely large class of free commoners. The way in which China’s complex social structure obscures easy comparison with Northwest Europe is most clearly seen through the experiences of women and the activities of households.

In China, a bureaucratization of Chinese household heads institutionalized them as part of the imperial chain of command. This parallels in interesting ways the effect on household and family set in train by East Elbian and Habsburg absolutism discussed above. Chinese household heads had great flexibility in maintaining household labor by constructing families according to current need through marriage, adoption, divorce, bondservanthood, and even, in extremity, through pawn and sale. This flexibility is well illustrated in the wide variation we find in the surprisingly protean Chinese marriage forms, which contrast sharply with the far-simpler northwest European marriage regime. Chinese marital types were defined through variation

71. Matthew H. Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press).

in postmarital residence, age at marriage, and other contractually negotiable factors. Further, through state-supported gender inequality, parents could and should subordinate the well-being of girls to that of boys. In cultural expectation and legal reality, marrying a daughter was a more freely negotiable process than marry a son.

Patrivirilocality was everywhere the Chinese norm. Uxorilocal marriage, while providing flexibility to parents who had only daughters, or whose sons were too young to work, was culturally far from ideal for the groom, evaluated as equal to long-term contract labor: a Chinese version of Rollenerganzungszwang. Uxorilocal marriage was sometimes impossible. The would-be bride’s lineage agnates might bully or drive out such a husband, or prevent the wedding altogether. Or, elsewhere, powerful lineage members might “cherry-pick” the most promising young men from weak neighboring lineages, adopting or marrying them in almost forcibly. Neolocality without parental permission was legally punishable and virtually nonexistent not only for women, but also for men with living parents.

Age at marriage for girls was ideally reached at puberty, and virtually all Chinese women assumed marital duties shortly after menarche. In 1985, Arthur Wolf summarized then-available data on age at first marriage from a variety of sources: they center unambiguously on a woman’s seventeenth year. A girl’s marriage might be arranged very early in her life, even prenatally. It was only realized, as elderly informants readily confirm, as soon as conveniently possible after menarche. Marriage shortly after seventeen accords well with that calculated from a large sample of Sichuan women, whose average age at menarche was sixteen. If parents could afford it, boys were married in their late teens also, presumably, when they appeared to have reached manhood. Given how many men ultimately did not marry, however, the best calculation of average marriage age for men was twenty-one.

In some regions, girl children went as brides to their virilocal marital homes very young, even in early infancy. In others, the transfer of an adult


76. Arthur P. Wolf and Huang Chieh-shang, Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1980). Neither work nor sexual services were required of very young brides, of course, but the bonding between daughter-in-law and her rearing mother-in-law was recognized as an important part of a labor discipline regime.
bride was normatively delayed for three to six years so that her earnings might continue to accrue to her natal family.\footnote{Janice Stockard, \textit{Daughters of the Canton Delta: Marriage Patterns and Economic Strategies in South China, 1860-1930.} (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1983).} In Sichuan and some northern provinces, adult brides were brought into their husband’s family while the husband-to-be was still a young child if the family was short of adult labor.\footnote{Hill Gates, April 1992 fieldnotes.} For the approximately fifteen per cent of all Chinese men who lacked parental support or permission to marry, marriage came very late or not at all. Fewer than half of Taiwan’s early twentieth-century men had married by age 25.\footnote{George W. Barclay, \textit{Colonial Development and Population in Taiwan} (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 211.}

In addition to a first and formally married wife, prosperous Chinese men sometimes took concubines. Wife and concubines were formally ranked in order of their entry into the household, although different informal rankings readily developed among these cowives on the basis of sexual attractiveness, wealth and family background, success in bearing sons, and the like. A serving woman who bore a child recognized as her master’s might be elevated to the status of concubine with virtually no ritual to mark her passage. The higher status gave her child rights of inheritance. Even the wife of a monogamous man, however, might occupy one of several culturally meaningful statuses depending on the ritual surrounding her transfer: a bride who was carried to her new home in a sedan chair (and these too could be ranked!); a bride who walked, but in daylight and with an escort; a remarrying widow who came to her second husband on foot and under cover of darkness.

This spectrum of female dignity can be further extended when we return to the subject of servants. The right to give a girl in marriage was transferable (although never her own), and might be contracted to an employer along with her labor power—as in Tuscany. In this way, the overlap between woman-as-worker and woman-as-kin was reinforced, the distinction between servant and wife blurred. Status differences were of great importance to women, and not only for their symbolic value. While all women (perhaps excepting the very rich) were expected to work as part of the marital bargain, those of lower-status were less able to defend themselves against truly egregious labor demands. The “little daughter-in-law” (\textit{sim-pua}) in a Taiwanese minor marriage was proverbially harshly treated, underfed, and worked harder than a daughter or major-married daughter-in-law.

The commodification of persons was widespread in late imperial China.\footnote{The commodification of labor power by the hour, day, or piece far less so. Live-in service was unusual for Chinese girls and woman, and by no means desirable.}
When a family allocated a girl's labor power, they preferred to transfer her as a total person—a kinswoman, or at least a contractual dependent—rather than to risk separating her labor power from her other human attributes. In their highly commercialized political economy, parents knew that even a low-ranking wifely status provided some protection to a daughter, especially against employment as sex workers. In an early twentieth-century autobiography, a Chinese woman her amanuensis calls Old Mrs. Ning admits her shame in going “out” to work—for wages, living in someone else’s house. Married to a man so lost to opium that he tried to sell their daughter, Ning was desperate:

Day after day I sat at home. Hunger gnawed. What could I do? .... A woman could not go out of the courtyard. If a woman went out to service the neighbors all laughed. They said, “So and so's wife has gone out to service.” Or they said, “So and so’s daughter has gone out to service.” I did not know enough even to beg.

But beg she eventually does, finding it “not the hardest” life. Tired of this, her husband secretly sells their second daughter. Ning visits the childless second wife of an official who has purchased the girl. A former prostitute, this kindly and street-smart woman promises to treat the child as a daughter rather than a slave, and urges Ning to take her remaining child and strike out on her own. Sensible Ning takes her advice:

I was through with begging. For a year I had begged for my food but had lived in my own home. Now I could not live in my home and must “come out,” even though women of my family had never “come out” before.81

Chinese boys were hired out more often than their sisters, when possible on contracts for a year’s work, renewable at the next lunar new year. Some boys succeeded in expanding family resources to the point where their own marriages and children could be supported. Others failed. But the celibacy of these “bare sticks” was religiously blank, culturally disesteemed and pragmatically problematic.

With one important exception to be discussed below, quantitative evidence for waged Chinese servants is sparse. What we have is largely from Taiwan, and differs sharply from the figures for European life cycle servanting. In 1935, a Japanese household survey of nine Taipei peri-urban villages totalling 6,496 people uncovered only 110 listed as hired hands—0.02 percent. Probably most of these were male. Even Taiwan’s detailed household registers are not always helpful in distinguishing kin from servants. Under this system, an adult like Old Mrs. Ning would simply be registered as “living together” with the rest of the household. Bondservants were sometimes described as such in the early Taiwan registers, but Japanese opposition to unfree labor resulted in some of these *cabo kan* being reregistered as little daughters-in-law or adoptive daughters. Similar slippage obscured the enumeration of youthful girl servants in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and San Francisco in these years. Tentative figures from the ongoing Taiwan project shows that in a sample of over 2,000 Taipei households during the 1880s through 1905, only 24 girls were registered as *cabo kana* brought in, and 22 sent out; in several hundred households from the traditional town Lukang, the comparable figures are 22 and 17. Numbers of *cabo kana* included in rural samples are vanishingly small.

Our best evidence for the labor structure of late traditional Chinese rural economy comes from the Buck survey. Between 1929 and 1933, a team of Chinese researcher headed by John Lossing Buck surveyed 16,786 farms in 168 localities, and 38,256 farm families in twenty-two provinces of China, producing an invaluable trove of real-time statistical information. We illustrate with figures from selected sites:

1. for China as a whole,
2. for the northern, wheat-growing region,
3. for the southern rice-growing region,
4. for the province of Sichuan, and
5. for a Sichuan county, Suining, a cotton-growing and processing protoindustrial center that supplied a large southwest China hinterland.

Table 1 shows the importance of Chinese rural labor use in “subsidiary” production – largely handcraft and transport – in this long-commoditized political economy. Buck summarizes the pan-China findings on farm labor: “Farm work occupies the full time of only a little over two-thirds of the farm population, subsidiary work one-eighth and farm and subsidiary work combined one-fifth.” “Farm work constitutes 80 per cent and subsidiary work 20 per cent of all work”

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These calculations are based on definitions of man-equivalent days of 0.8 for women and 0.5 for child workers, and on the complete omission of “purely domestic work” (Definitions, Statistics volume). In Sichuan province, these labor burdens were distributed more evenly across the age and gender categories than in China as a whole. In highly commercialized Suining county, the burden is yet more evenly spread. Nearly 10 percent of Suining male labor was absorbed in subsidiary work, with another 5.6 percent partially so absorbed. Full and part time subsidiary work engaged nearly one-fourth of Suining’s adult women.

Table 2, drawn from Hill Gates’ Sichuan surveys, allows for further refinement of labor analysis. Both before and after marriage – as “girls” and as “women,” Sichuan’s female labor force was deeply engaged in subsidiary work, principally in making textiles for home use. This level of engagement varied greatly across Sichuan, but in a sub-sample of 500 Suining county women, 270 or 54 percent, had spun or woven cotton as girls and just after marriage.

Judging by Gates’ survey of 4,987 Sichuan women in 1992, the subsidiary work of children, or at least of girls, was seriously underestimated in the

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Table 1 Percent of persons employed in farm and subsidiary work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor Category</th>
<th>Geographic Unit</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Sichuan</th>
<th>Suining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm only</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sub. only</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm/sub.</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm only</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sub. only</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm/sub.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm only</td>
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<td>10.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sub. only</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm/sub.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Buck (from Table 1, Statistics Volume)

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85. Hill Gates, questionnaires and fieldnotes, 1992. Support for this fieldwork by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation is gratefully acknowledged.
Table 4 Number of Sichuanese women 65 years and over, who performed selected work while unmarried and recently married

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Premarital work at home wage work for use/sale</th>
<th>Marital work at home wage work for use/sale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spin cotton</td>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weave cotton</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twist hemp or ramie</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weave hemp or ramie</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raise silkworm</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reel silk</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weave silk</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embroider, sew</td>
<td>1,516</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pick tea</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process tea</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pick opium</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other craft</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: John Lossing Buck, *Land Utilization in China* (Nanking, 1937)

Buck data. This error almost certainly stems from two sources: much of girls’ work in such tasks as spinning cotton or other textile fibers was culturally classed as “purely domestic” even when their products regularly entered the market; and girls’ work was culturally devalued even when its character as commodity production was recognized. Table 2 enumerates Sichuanese women who as farm girls and young married women produced textiles and other goods, often for sale or for wages. Even when made for home consumption, these products were mostly daily essentials which, if not made at home, would have had to be purchased.

Buck correctly assumes that Chinese farm families provided most of their own labor force, with parents depending on sons and unmarried daughters, on married-in daughters-in-law, on the occasional uxorilocally-married son-in-law, and on adoptions of both kin and non-kin. He documents as well the practice of wage labor that was used especially to make up for deficits in male labor power. Casual daily wage labor was not uncommon, but Chinese farmers depended as well on long-term hires. Most were men known as chang gong, employed for a calendar year, and with a social standing distinctly inferior to that of their employers. Farm servants were not, as in northwestern Europe, the class equals
of their employers; sending a son out to work for others was a clear sign of poverty and a likely indication that the son would not inherit enough to marry.

Table 3 shows the percentages both of employees hired into farms, and of farm families who hired members out as agricultural laborers.

According to Buck, 17 percent of all China’s farm families thus hired workers in, and 14.1 hired them out; in Sichuan, the figures are 18.2 and 21 percent, slightly over the societal average. These figures that make sense if we assume that many of the poorest households had labor surplus to their means of production, and that proportionately fewer rich and middle farms hired them.

The number of people who circulated through wage work in rural China was not trivial, but as an institution, servanthood was patterned very differently from that of European life-cycle servanthood. In addition to its greater class inequality, Chinese long-term wage-work was much more sharply gendered. The percentages of “females” – married women – hiring in were minuscule, and the proportion of girls among the “children” hiring in was probably only somewhat larger.

Using Gates’ surveys, the realities of female work can be seen more clearly. Girls and women worked as waged agricultural workers for other families, as domestics, as production servants in other families’ businesses, and as wetnurses, but always in small numbers. By their own account, only 131, or three percent of unmarried girls in Sichuan did farm work for wages, and in Suining, only four girls earned agricultural wages. After marriage, more women worked out in farming: 172, or three percent in the province, and 207, or 41 percent in Suining county. For Sichuan province, 255 women, five percent, had become domestic servants before marriage, and 172, three percent, had done so after marriage. For

Table 3 Proportion of farms hiring in farm year-laborers, and of farm families having family members hired out as agricultural laborers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor Category</th>
<th>Geographic Unit</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Sichuan</th>
<th>Suining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>farms hiring in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farms hiring out</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Buck (from Tables 1 and 6, Statistical Volume)
Suining, where home protoindustries depending on female labor were numerous, the number of girl domestic servants was 5; married women who had been servants numbered 17. These were primarily cooks, cleaners, baby-tenders, waiting-women, and the like. Many also performed production tasks such as spinning or tea-picking when needed, just as European servants may have occasionally pitched in for domestic work. The boundary between domestic and production servant was probably more blurred in China than in Europe.

Some Sichuan and Suining girls and women also spent time as servants in small businesses belonging to families other than their own, again in tiny numbers. Of the unmarried, only 133, or three percent in Sichuan province, and 6 in our Suining site, were production servants; of the married, 310, or 6 percent in Sichuan, and 19 in Suining were so employed. The highest-waged form of service, wet-nursing, employed 118, or two percent of Sichuan (married) women, and only 10 Suining (married) women. On the whole, wage-earning service was a minor occupation for rural Chinese females. The enormous quantities of labor they contributed to social reproduction and to the trades in tea, textiles, opium, and other valuable goods were done as kinswomen and wives, not as wage-workers.

Life-cycle service in a strict Northwest European sense was clearly not present in rural China. Most labor mobility occurred when girls left their natal homes to work as daughters-in-law in the homes of their mothers-in-law, sometimes as children. Sending Chinese children out to short-term and lifelong wage work were strategies of poverty, done at too low a rate to enable families to compensate for short-term labor/resource imbalances. Wage-work by the young did not redefine the Chinese family except when a daughter was transferred to another household as a bondservant. Then, the right to marry her out was sometimes part of the contract between parent and employer. The line between kin and non-kin was never completely erased in the Chinese legal system; kinship relations were seen as the very essence of society, and so were carefully specified and supervised by agents of the state. The interests of both state and patrilineal family were served by the openness and ambiguity of household construction in which consanguineal, affinal, and fictive kinship all played roles.86

Marriage and Service in Japan

From the seventeenth century, Japanese rulers too invented social and cultural market-control mechanism to manage their commoners. They reined in expanding regional commerce and its agents not only by closing their borders to foreigners and by regulating and taxing trade, but also by reasserting fixed social

86. See Hill Gates’ comparison of Chinese and Northwestern European girls’ work, this volume.
statuses including those of kinship, class, and service.\textsuperscript{87} Japan’s modern history of rapid and well-indigenized economic development suggests that they were somewhat less successful than their Chinese counterparts at excluding market influence on social structure. Did Japanese marriage regimes and patterns of service play a role in this transition?

Osamu Saito\textsuperscript{88} (this volume) argues that Japan stands somewhere between Hajnal’s marriage regime extremes; this is true for service as well. While many social-relational patterns described above for China apply to Japan (as to most pre-industrial agrarian societies), Japan is notable for the unusually late age at marriage of both women and men. The average age for women in seven seventeenth and eighteenth century communities was 23.9, with men’s ages averaging slightly higher.\textsuperscript{89} This pattern creates greater possibilities for a phase of life-cycle servanthood in Japan than in China. As in China, distinctions between Japanese domestic and production servants were not drawn sharply, especially for girls and women. As in Europe, education in skills, manners, and literacy from their masters fitted young servants for future household businesses and farms of their own. Mary Louise Nagato has found that, especially in central Japan, rural household registers reveal a pattern of life-course domestic service that resulted in changes in family practice.\textsuperscript{90}

The Tokugawa state (1603-1868) encouraged a looser primogeniture (not always of males only) that created a classic “second son” problem.\textsuperscript{91} Second (and subsequent) sons and their households often remained dependent on the household where ritual family headship was lodged; household members superfluous to their household’s labor needs were sold, bonded, apprenticed, or hired to other households. Hereditary bondservants and bondservants who had been raised to the status of tenants (and consequently, in some regions, of kin) were common as well.\textsuperscript{92} Marriage, divorce, adoption, and infanticide were also used to adjust household labor needs. Taking Japan and the Tokugawa period as wholes,
and ignoring spatial and temporal changes, we see another version of “Eastern” society where strong parental/household head authority was the main mechanism for transferring labor.

As Gary Leupp makes clear, however, Japan’s distinctiveness within Hajnal’s East is very marked in its secular tendency to eliminate the sale of persons, to reduce bondservanthood, and to develop a fully free labor market. Urban servants had more opportunities than rural ones, and many rural youth migrated to seize them.

By 1700 Japan was one of the most “urbanized” societies on the globe, and surely the most urban of non-Western societies. In her towns and cities, one-fifth to one-third of the population typically consisted of hired servants, shophands and manual laborers. Few other societies have embarked upon the road to industrialization with so large and experienced an urban proletariat at hand.93

In the rapid expansion of Tokugawa commerce, many niches for petty producers of goods and services opened. Servants sometimes became independent tradesmen earning better incomes. Because of Japan’s large market for sexual services, women too might rise from prostitute-employee or bondservant to brothel-, bar-, or restaurant-keeper.

In this fluid political economy, marriage ages of both men and women varied greatly, although Saito observes that “virtually all people married” eventually. Junior kinsmen and men in service might marry, but had to wait for their master to arrange or at least permit the marriage. They often remained dependent even after marriage. The age of marriage of a female servant, like that of most daughters, was determined by her household’s head in part at least for the household’s economic convenience. Marriage ages for Japanese women form a gradient from lows in the lower teens in non-migrating northeasterners to highs in the middle twenties in the more commercialized southwest.94 In sharp contrast to China, but resembling the Northwest European pattern, regionally-specific late marriage left a space in Japanese lifecourses for lifecycle servanthood by both men and women.95

Conclusion
From these comparisons, we draw what we hope are useful conclusions about the differential significance of the various factors from which all service regimes are constituted. Parental control over marriage, adoption, and other ways of building households through expanding their kin base is an important variable, and its strength depends on many local factors. Some government and religious

95. Saito, this volume.
authorities directly mandate the nature of kin relations, and almost everywhere take an interest in the property-transmission and labor-control practices of families. Markets for workers and their products influenced families. Female autonomy in marriage choice, and cultural permission for girls to work and live away from home without compromising their social status are essentials.

For early modern times across Eurasia, investigation of servants and service illuminates not only servanthood, but protoindustrialism and transitions to industrialism, women’s life trajectories, and social mobility. While it deserves study for these and other reasons, Hajnal paid it particular attention because it solved the puzzle of what so many fertile Northwest European women did in their uniquely lengthy period between marriage and puberty. The further puzzle of why they did this has called forth considerable agreement on an economic niche model. Accumulating the skills and means of production necessary to furnish and support a neolocal household was a prerequisite to marriage, and Northwest European cultural expectations, inheritance patterns, and economic growth made such accumulation possible for many couples. To a surprising extent, Japan parallels this complex. China, by contrast, is a classic case of the Hajnalian “East.”

While niche attainment was surely important to the ubiquity of life cycle service in its home region, an explanation that stops with an emphasis on individual and couple interests is incomplete for both Europe and Japan. Household and parental interests remained engaged, often rationalizing labor needs through in- and out-hiring of young workers. Perhaps the most fruitful direction for new comparative study would be to investigate the circulation of youthful labor made possible by life cycle servanthood and late marriage. Was this a more plausible transition, for both individuals and society, from wholly kin-based dependent reciprocity to market-dependent wage-labor? The Japanese case contributes to the possibility that a marriage regime allowing for late marriage may have been a significant factor in the great transformation to industrial capitalism.

The Japan case is important. Comparison with an “East” more complex than the one Hajnal sketched from Indian and Chinese materials calls into question that the European marriage pattern existed, and could exist, only in a context that supported an unusual degree of autonomy for girls and young women. Eastern and Southern European evidence add to the complexity of the analytical mix. There, firmer state and parental controls, especially on girls and women, aligned with slower transitions to industrial capitalism. Northwest Europe and China represent extremes of a spectrum of possibilities, with Japan closer to the Netherlands, and Austria to China than we might have anticipated.

96. Arthur P. Wolf’s paper, this volume, distinguishes helpfully between forms of patriarchy characteristic of European and Chinese societies.
Girls’ work in China and North-Western Europe: of guniang and meisjes

Hill Gates
In societies where the household is the principal unit of economic production as well as consumption...the marriage pattern is tied in very intimately with the performance of the economy of a whole. ...many...things cannot be the same in a society where a bride is usually a girl of 16, and one in which she is typically a woman of 24. These things are perhaps obvious, but they have not been much explored.

John Hajnal, “European Marriage Patterns in Perspective” (1965), 142

**Hajnal’s puzzle and women’s work**

When John Hajnal dichotomized the world into two very different marriage patterns in 1965,¹ he stuck resolutely to defining and describing them. Europeans (predominantly those of Northwest Europe, we now know) married about ten years later than young people in all other societies. He offered no explanation for this difference except to observe (in a later work) that “[i]t may turn out that aspects of the Northwest European household formation systems can be shown to be very old indeed.”² In 1983, he further distinguished the European and the Eastern marriage regimes by documenting a peculiarity of European labor allocation. In their post-puberty-pre-marital decade, a great many European youths engaged in a form of waged labor: life-cycle servanting that began roughly at puberty, and ended with marriage only when they could afford to establish a nuclear household. East of Hajnal’s line, youths married at puberty and joined patrivirilocal households where kin relations were the key relations of production throughout life.

Since then, many scholars have documented European life-cycle servanting and its age parameters. In Austria, for example, most servants were between 15 and 29 years of age, and “the proportion of under 15 year-olds in service is far less than the proportion of over 30 year-olds”;³ English farm servants concentrated in the age range of 15 to 24.⁴ Servanting typically began at puberty, and ended, with marriage, after a decade or more of unmarried life.

Hajnal was concerned for causality. He dared to guess that the late mar-

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riage and servanting pattern had economic consequences for “the uniquely European ‘take-off’ into modern economic growth”. In a footnote, he supposes that “[t]he mere presence in the labor force of a large number of adult women not involved in child-bearing or -rearing must have been a considerable advantage to the eighteenth-century European economies”. Still, he offered neither evidence nor argumentation to support the possibility. I will dispute that supposition by using Chinese evidence.

In both papers, Hajnal omits explanation of differing household formation patterns and of their possible economy-wide consequences. Neither paper stresses the sexes of the young people; we learn little of what might have been specific to the pre- and post-marital work of girls and women. In this paper, I try for a more fully gendered comparison.

Impressed by the contrast between Chinese and Northwest European treatment of young people, Arthur Wolf offers an explanation for that contrast. In “Europe and China: Two kinds of patriarchy” (this volume, chapter 10), Wolf views these cases from the more common social perspective, that of the majority who live beyond the Hajnal line. Why would parents forego the labor of their own adolescents and hire young strangers into their households? Wolf’s answer takes us through a chain of reasoning that ultimately leads to the Chinese state and, by implication, to the androcentric inclinations of other Eurasian agrarian empires. The strong management of kinship and gender by the centralized and highly consistent Chinese bureaucracy created great parental authority. The fragmented and often contradictory positions of European authorities did not.

Throughout the late imperial period, functionaries of the Chinese state stood ready to back parental power with criminal sanctions, thus assuring Chinese parents of the right to control marriage and career for even their adult children. They operated under what Wolf calls “state patriarchy”.

European parents lacked such definitively sanctioned rights in secular and church courts. Their power to control childrens’ marriages was even opposed by church doctrine that established marriage as a matter of individual conscience. European parents were left chiefly with the power of the purse – what Wolf calls “property patriarchy” – to enforce their wills on disobedient children. European employers of life-cycle servants, by contrast, had the full force of contract law behind their management of their hired ploughboys and dairymaids. Hajnal’s broad, vague, and implicitly cultural account is thus narrowed and clarified: the political-organizational patterns of agrarian empires are contrasted with Europe’s peculiarly fragmented authority structures.

A further question remains. Why would Northwest European young people themselves opt for late marriage, throwing away a whole decade of sexual

pleasure and female fertility, a decade when most of the world’s women married and bore children? Early modern teen-agers may have been self-controlled pragmatists waiting to inherit economic niches, but they were full of hormones and a romanticized popular culture as well. Local Romeos and Juliets were not unheard of.

To resolve this puzzle, I add three additional historical materialist factors: the political economy of household production, the inherent qualities of specific products, and the biology of the female life-cycle as these may have influenced the behavior of young women. I focus on the complex integration of pre-industrial women’s double task: to bear and rear children while also contributing to the subsistence and even accumulation of households. I hope to bring more explanatory power to the Hajnal dichotomy by looking at the distribution of specific sorts of labor throughout female life – at lifetime labor totals.

The source materials available for the Northwest European and Chinese cases are not well matched. Millions of women still live in Chinese villages and cities, happy to discuss the strange old pre-industrial days of their childhoods; but written records for China are sparse, unreliable, and the subject of much contention. Europe rejoices in a positively obsessive archival base for population and labor studies; but women’s pre-industrial experiences are now beyond the reach of direct commentary by the women who lived them.

Findings and faults of feminist historians

The household, the central pre-industrial nexus between production and reproduction and between women’s identities and women’s labor, has been much studied by feminist analysts. Their research enables us to see the Hajnal problem more clearly than was possible when his essays were written. The main themes of this tradition, mostly from European materials, are represented well in three exemplary books.

Judith M. Bennett’s study of early modern ale-brewing in England6 is a paradigmatic study of a period and a craft that women formerly dominated, and from which they were marginalized as more highly-capitalized production put alewives out of business. Angelique Janssens’ edited collection7 also focuses on the retreat into domesticity of women who were formerly independent producers or full partners with their husbands in commodity production, emphasizing the revision of gender identities that this entailed. Margaret Spufford’s early classic The Great Reclothing of Early England8 announced another central theme

in women’s history: the emergence of women as consumers of household and personal goods that simultaneously changed their identities and drove market demand.

This literature is now so well developed as to have attracted powerful criticisms. Jan de Vries argues against making too much of shifts in gender identity and of women-as-consumers, emphasizing that household goods and services for autoconsumption (including those that increase the family’s stock of human capital) are many and varied. He reminds us that household need for these is conditioned, certainly, by human agency and preferences, but also by some rather sharp external constraints. Those linked to major changes in macroeconomic factors such as wages and subsistence prices have proven especially robust.9

Amanda Vickery balks at tying capitalism to middle-class formation via changes in gender division of labor. While agreeing that pre-capitalist European women may have had a more autonomous “golden age” of production, she requires a higher standard of proof for its existence than is sometimes offered. “What is extremely difficult to sustain (...) is the argument that sometime between 1650 and 1850 the public/private distinction was constituted or radically reconstituted in a way that transformed relations between the sexes.” Much evidence for that shift, she argues, is based on “discourses of femininity and masculinity, space and authority, found in printed literature.... [T]heir power to shape female language and behavior needs to be demonstrated not taken as read”.10 The consensus in the late 1990s appeared to be that gender and consumption, once regrettably neglected, have now been fully subsumed into the wider academic discourse on European political economy; but they cannot be seen to be prime movers.

European and other proto-industrializations
The proto-industrialism approach integrates household production with commercialization, demographic trends, and the specifics of women’s work lives. European proto-industrialization and its East Asian analogues are perhaps the best starting points for situating women’s activities as both workers and mothers


in agrarian societies. As initially formulated, proto-industrialization – PI – is a complex of economic and demographic behavior that depends on commodity production by households. Given a substantial market for handicrafts and a limitation on land, intensification leads to more and more individuals subsisting on labor inputs into high-value goods, such as textiles. Young people, able to support themselves from their own work, and unlikely to inherit means of production, hive off earlier from parental households. Marriage age falls, fertility rises, and the ensuing growth of waged labor leads directly into a capitalist mode of production. In some places and times, the correlations are strong and appear to have driven an “industrious revolution” of intensification.

Fuller examination of European instances has revealed what Sheilagh Ogilvie calls “two distinct assessments of proto-industrialization” as a world-historical transition. Peter Kriedte and Hans Medick, in what they call their ‘system concept,’ regard the proto-industrialization phase as a separate economic system; that is, it was a separate mode of production which prevailed during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and which united elements of both feudal and capitalist modes. Jurgen Schlumbohn, by contrast, holds that although the proto-industrialization phase did have features of both feudal and capitalistic modes of production, it did not constitute a system of its own: it was a process, and remained part of the feudal mode of production.

The PI paradigm has proven impossible to generalize as widely as originally envisioned. In many places and times, its variables do not correlate neatly, and causality is hard to demonstrate. Even where we do find PI populations with rising fertility, they do not necessarily reproduce themselves as


social formations, much less lead directly to a capitalist regime of waged labor. Sometimes, however, p1 did loosen the European nuptiality valve. In eighteenth-century Ulster, linen production depended on farmer-weavers who often hired spinner-servants aged between 16 and 25. Their age at marriage declined under nineteenth-century intensification.\textsuperscript{14} By contrast, mean ages at first marriage for two cohorts of p1 Borne and Wierden women analyzed by François Hendrickx range from 25.55 to 29.20.\textsuperscript{15} In these Dutch sites, p1 did not sharply lower age at marriage. p1 created European anomalies, not European norms; late marriage remained the characteristic Northwest standard with which the Chinese case should be compared.

Despite these uncertainties, p1 continues to engage scholarly attention because it has been so ubiquitous for so long. Household production for the market was neither rare nor limited to Europe in the preindustrial world. As analyses of economic intensification in pre- and early-industrial Asia increasingly suggest, “women’s flexibility and elasticity (...) were crucial” for maintaining household production of both farm and handicraft commodities in both preindustrial and recent times.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Chinese petty capitalism}

Today, in many parts of the global economy, household-based forms of commodity production persist. In marginal versions, p1 is a survival strategy: tiny, local, non-accumulating, what Keith Hart labelled the informal economy.\textsuperscript{17} A Chinese “industrious revolution,” by contrast, emerged a millennium ago, and flourishes now as an important adjunct to capitalist and state production there. This petty capitalism puts a flexible survival-and-accumulation platform under the internationally more visible corporate production for which the area is famous. Petty


\textsuperscript{15} Hendrickx, ‘In Order Not to Fall into Poverty’, Table 11, p. 143.


capitalism depends on the non-waged labor of women and children as well as complex forms of apprenticeship and waged, but often almost indentured labor. Late imperial China was arguably even more proto-industrialized than Europe – in part and in whole. In my modes-of-production analysis, I emphasize that petty commodity production fared very differently from its European analogues under China’s unified and persistent state management of property rights. China’s agrarian civilization was markedly unlike the “feudalism” that existed in Europe after the fall of the Roman empire. By its early modern (or late imperial) period beginning about 1000 bp., the state mode had harnessed the market, ingenuously engaging some of capitalism’s accumulative power without allowing capitalist relations of production to supersede those of the family firm.

A brief glimpse at Chinese history captures this slow trajectory. From the beginning of the Song dynasty – around 900 bp., household regimes of production for the market profoundly affected Chinese life. Evidence for both a vigorous market and for household production as its foundation is abundant. Song China was highly urbanized; about one-fifth of its population – close to 25,000,000 people – lived in cities and towns where commerce, handicraft, some experiments in large-scale industry, and service trades flourished. Textiles are especially illustrative. Silk-making was expanding enormously: “Certain areas began to specialize in the rearing of silkworms, speculative transactions in mulberry leaves made their appearance, merchants served the rural textile areas as middlemen and collectors of output, and merchant capital gradually extended its control over the villages.” Cotton was introduced in the thirteenth century, and soon replaced hemp, ramie, silk, and lesser fibers as the textile staple.

**The pattern continues through time**

By the 1680s, the Manchus had consolidated their control over the former Ming empire and favorable economic developments resumed, continuing until 1800. While they resemble the late Ming market expansion, the early Ch’ing market economy achieved far greater regional trade interdependency, more extensive factor and product market integration, and increased dependency on overseas markets than the Ming. Chinese silks, grasscloths, and even cottons were

major exports to Central and Southeast Asia, India, and even the Mediterranean. Far more must have been consumed domestically.

For a thousand years, Chinese rulers succeeded in encouraging a lively market while at the same time precluding the emergence of a hegemonic capitalism. They did so in large part by building meticulously-defined kinship and gender statuses directly into the class hierarchy, and by channeling much petty capitalist accumulation into tributary social and cultural capital. Households remained China’s characteristic production unit as well as its cultural ideal.

In Europe, petty capitalism spread and grew for centuries, generating a market mentality that suffused its commoners’ lives. Petty capitalism saw regional booms and busts, but arguably raised the general standard of living continuously until the end of the eighteenth century. Over the *longue durée*, its circuits meshed remarkably smoothly with those of the non-market tributary mode. Together, the two slowly tightened the pressure on Chinese women to produce, reproduce, and subordinate themselves.

### Of cheese and childcare
Household production and its place in wider political economies is a useful starting place for solving Hajnal’s puzzle. The inherent properties of the commodities being produced offer another vantage. Here, I emphasize valuable, marketable durables made by girls and women that were possible sources of accumulation and objects of historical notice. What were girls and young women making in our two regions?

A catalog of such products would require many pages; textiles and processed foods would dominate the list. With necessary brevity, I note some important examples. European and Chinese girls and women were the principal producers of yarn and plain cloth for home use and local markets, and they processed the fine yarns or filaments from which high-quality export fabrics were woven by male specialists. In both regions, spinning conjured up female imagery.

Food processing for market was also common in both. Chinese women tell me of noodle-pulling, pickle-making, and fish-drying enterprises to which their girlhood labor was essential. But fish-drying and noodle-making are not synecdoches for Chinese women’s work – as textile-making surely is.

Northwest European women’s association with the processing of regional-

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ly important foodstuffs, however, was culturally salient. The preservation of milk as butter and cheese was significant in Northwestern European ecologies and economies. As early as the late neolithic, chiefs in Denmark acquired cash for their purchases of Central European metals from selling cattle and their secondary products – cheese and hides – in Germany and the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{24} Sophisticated home cheesemaking had reached even marginal parts of the region by early modern times.\textsuperscript{25} From mediaeval times, surpluses beyond household need were sold in established butter and cheese markets; cheese especially was purchased in substantial quantities for military and welfare distribution.\textsuperscript{26} Who made the cheese?

Maidservant, maid, dairymaid, maiden: these blooming young women were both unwed and the skilled hands in their region’s oldest proto-industry. In European tradition, “the dairymaid was young, invariably robust, often physically large, with rosy cheeks. She sometimes also represented fecundity and its accompaniment, lactation.”\textsuperscript{27} The folklore of Northwestern Europe includes a tangle of tales of sex, cows, and the ways of a man with a maid or a heifer. Randy young men were reputed to prod milch-cows into drying up and dairymaids into troublesome pregnancies. These pragmatic problems were hedged against by folkish, legal, and ecclesiastical taboos. In late 17th century Sweden, anxieties about pollution by men resulted in a Royal Ordinance requiring use of female herders as much as possible. “This ordinance was repeatedly read in public at the meetings of the county courts and in church. In 1723, the court ordered priests to instruct boys diligently in hopes of averting both sin and financial loss.” Milking sheds were marked as female places, almost tabooed to males, and milking was considered too “intimate” for men.\textsuperscript{28}

The power of men to pollute dairies and dairymaids emphasizes the concern for cleanliness of the maid’s person. In Tudor England, no woman should “have anything to do with either the butter or cheese when they have their ter-

\textsuperscript{24} Timothy Earle, \textit{How Chiefs Come to Power. The Political Economy in Prehistory} (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 100, 102.
\textsuperscript{25} Margaret Spufford, \textit{Contrasting Communities. English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).
\textsuperscript{26} Fernand Braudel provides ample evidence for long-distance trade in dairy products in his study of sixteenth century Mediterranean life (1972: 42, 86, 104, 111, 123, 151, 157, etc.); no similar synthesis surveys this trade in Northwestern Europe, but see Valenze (1991), Bourke (1990), and Jensen (1988).
mes”. “A skilful, cleanly wench was beyond price in the dairy and it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that her experience and ability began to be superseded by machines.”

29 English dairymaids produced for market but did so within the framework of a rich traditional work culture in which the sexual division of labor was a prominent and cherished element. Cheese dairying families passed on skills from generation to generation, intermarried among themselves, and subscribed to a set of beliefs that rendered women’s participation crucial to the survival of their entire way of life. Cheesemaking women aggressively protected their turf, the cheese room.

30 Scandinavian women controlled their cowsheds in yet broader terms; girls and unmarried women met lovers and slept there in summer.

It is not possible to pursue here the centuries'-long – perhaps millennial – struggle of Northwestern European girls to monopolize skilled work and control their sexual lives. Hints are offered, however, in nineteenth century American newspapers; domestic disagreements often arose when mother and daughters tried to keep the butter and cheese money from disappearing into patriarchal pockets.

The dairymaid’s work required skill, cleanliness, perhaps a degree of autonomy. But it required strength as well. Milking is tiring; cattle are large and often dangerous; making sound butter and cheese requires hoisting heavy buckets and vats; all those buckets must be kept clean lest the product spoil and the household’s income suffer. Gallons of scalding milk make the dairy a risky place for workers and a threat to life, as the accidental boiling death of a weakly fifteen-year-old attested. “Home cheesemaking in the nineteenth century (...) was an extremely exacting, touchy, and laborious process, demanding unremitting attention.” It was “classed as ‘heavy labor’ and thereby distinguished from spinning and weaving.” “Intense interest and anxiety” were required to do it well.

Dairymaids are not only juicy and saucy; they are strong adults who must be free of childcare for extended, uninterrupted, intense work. They are learning an art – a “mystery” in mediaeval language – under a seasoned housewife. That art, in proto-industrial times, was in itself a substantial dowry. Life-cycle dairy servants may well have found a late age at marriage acceptable.

Did this career model influence Northwestern European women generally? Butter and cheese were not produced for sale throughout the region. Women often made other marketable goods, for Europe’s Northwest famously produced

linens and woollens. Conveniently, textiles and dairy products are asymmetrical in their labor demands. Dairymaids can ret and scutch, spin and weave in idle moments and the cows’ off-season, for these jobs are interruptible without ill result. To make cheese, however, women had to be strong and skilled and focused; those too weak or too encumbered to handle cows and churn butter were bad substitutes.

Northwest of Hajnal’s line, life-cycle biological capacities combined with the properties of some products might well explain the culturally ideal age at marriage. A parallel in China strengthens this interpretation. Childbearing was institutionally delayed past menarche in China’s silk-exporting south, and perhaps in a few other intensively proto-industrial regions. In the Canton Delta, girls married at puberty, the usual age. Then, however, they avoided pregnancy for an additional three to six years, and continued reeling silk for good wages, as they had done since childhood. In Fujian, some communities delayed transfer of brides who worked in labor gangs for several years after marriage. The reproductive phase of marriage was deferred for as long as many Europeans deferred marriage itself.

The Hajnal line is surely not merely the eastern boundary of a cattle-friendly European Bronze Age economy; William H. Durham traces many regional characteristics to the coevolution of although genetic and cultural factors related to milk consumption. But both cheese and silk floss remind us of the complexity and consequences of production processes, and how they can affect cultural decisions about women’s age at marriage.

Counting the labor of little girls
The labor of little girls was the foundation on which many of China’s most valuable domestic and commercial crops and handicrafts depended. Silk raising and reeling, tea picking and processing, opium collection, embroidering, and the spinning and weaving of cotton, ramie, hemp, and many lesser fibers are only the most obvious of these labors. The written record and my own fieldwork document many additional examples. Girls collected and distributed the insects that secreted “white wax” (used for paper finishing, batiking, and many other

35. Chuang and Wolf, in this volume.
processes); they counted and tied huge quantities of domestic and export paper spirit money; they helped their mothers construct mosquito nets: silky, elegant, and worth a plough cow.

Homespun cotton yarn is perhaps the best indicator of the widespread use of Chinese girls’ labor at the turn of the last century, when machine-spun yarn had not yet reached most of the vast inland. Elite men were almost perversely blind to that labor. Nevertheless, although indigenous record-keepers had little interest in the age and gender patterns of work, they took commercial textiles seriously – as did the emissaries of Western cotton manufacturers seeking to expand their markets, and present-day scholars of Chinese economic history such as Xu Xinwu. Accordingly, we know a good deal about the late imperial distribution of cotton growing and the marketing of raw cotton, homespun and imported machine-spun yarns, and homewoven cloth, known in the literature by its Chinese name, tubu. During the last half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, tubu competed effectively with industrial goods in its traditional overseas markets, to the distress of British manufacturers.

The following table summarizes for the years 1863 to 1949 China’s slowly-diminishing, but still surprisingly substantial exports of tubu. Beginning with 1875, after which the accounting method stabilizes, I give the average export quantity for every decade in the Chinese unit dan (or picul), equal to 140 pounds.

The interpretation of these figures is complicated by many factors: they are not inclusive of all exports, for China’s coast was rife with smuggling; the actual rise and fall of recorded tubu exports was influenced by a great range of domestic and foreign factors. As machine-spun yarn appeared on rural markets, much tubu was home-woven from it and the wholly “homespun” textile grew less common. Most importantly, exports are a poor proxy for domestic consumption, and can have amounted to only a small and uncertain proportion of local cloth used in China.

Still, the figures are useful for back-of-the-envelope calculations of the vast amounts of girl-days they represent. Women in many parts of China have told me that, with a simple spinning wheel, a girl normatively spun one liang in a full day of “yi tian, yi ye” – “a day and an evening”. Some could do better. With 20 liang to the jin, and 100 jin to the dan, one dan required 2,000 long girl-days.

Round up the 10-year average for 1915-25 to a tidy 60,000 dan, and assume a work-year of 300 days (girls had more to do than just spinning). Each year of that decade’s export production would have absorbed the full-time labors of about 400,000 girl spinners.

Based on the careful calculation of the cotton-rationing system of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, two jin of sturdy cotton fabric per person per year would have kept most people frugally comfortable. Returning to our turn-of-the-century population of 600,000,000, we see a minimal annual need of 1,200,000,000 jin of home-spun cotton yarn. At 20 days to the jin, 6,000,000 girl-days or 20,000 girl-years of labor would suffice, at the barest minimum, to supply China’s needs.

Given a sex ratio of about 115 males to 100 females, there were some 62,500,000 girls in our age range at the end of empire. One girl in ten must have been a full-time spinner of simple cotton yarn if survival were to be assured, leaving the other nine to work up silk, hemp, and ramie, pick tea, feed the pigs, help in dry-land agriculture and food processing, and look after little brother.

Information about the childhood work of pre-industrial China is abundantly available in the minds of Chinese elders; it simply wants collecting. Fieldwork interviews with such women in several provinces has greatly enriched our knowledge of tubu production, thus enabling us to contrast more precisely the two grand Hajnal marriage-and-family regimes. Bound by canons of modesty, and also blinkered by age-and-gender stereotypes that regularly disparaged the value of little girls, my informants usually failed to perceive their cotton spinning and other youthful work as contributions to household income. By interviewing large samples in each locality, I always found a subset who still remembered the cash or rice values of work-time, of an ounce of raw cotton or of yarn, of the monthly wage for a maidservant.

### Table 1. 10-Year Averages in Dan of Tubu Exports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>10-year Ave/Dan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1875-84</td>
<td>1,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-94</td>
<td>7,656</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895-04</td>
<td>27,367</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905-14</td>
<td>38,667</td>
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<td>1915-24</td>
<td>57,411</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925-34</td>
<td>38,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-41*</td>
<td>10,673*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 7-year average, missing data
Calculated from Table 1-7 of Xu Xinwu, Jiangnan Tubu Shi (1992)
These data are assembled from early 1990s surveys of nearly 6,000 women over 65 done in cooperation with the Sichuan Women’s Federation and supported by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation; from 3,600 done in Fujian in a Taiwan/Minnan project engaging the cooperation of scholars from Stanford University, the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, and Xiamen University, funded by the Luce Foundation; and from an as yet uncompleted Jiangnan project in which the Institute of Ethnology, Stanford, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, and Fudan University scholars cooperated, with the support of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation. Thanks to these institutions and helpful colleagues there, I was able to conduct approximately 300 interviews myself in three distinctly different regions of China, and pursue more fully background information about our research sites.

Table 2. Pre- and Post-Marital Cotton Spinners and Weavers in 10 Sichuan Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Pre-mar. no. spin</th>
<th>Pre-mar. %</th>
<th>Pre-mar. no. weave</th>
<th>Pre-mar. %</th>
<th>Post-mar. no. spin</th>
<th>Post-mar. %</th>
<th>Post-mar. no. weave</th>
<th>Post-mar. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longquan</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>168</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mingshan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>(N=491)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zhigong</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suining</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nantong</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laijiang</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>(N=499)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dazhu</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emei Shan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lezhi</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=495)</td>
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</table>
Our Sichuan informants especially gave us a good overview of many kinds of work they had performed early in life. Material pertaining to cotton spinning and weaving, summarized in table 2, provides considerable insight into the complex local variation within a province the size of France.

In Longquan, Suining, and Lezhi county sites, 50 per cent or more of all unmarried girls had spun cotton (though not necessarily for full days). Some had spun for home use, others to sell directly, and some for wages. We compared these figures with those for the Mingshan, Ba, and Emei Shan sites, where five percent or fewer girls had spun, and were reminded how dependent on the market many rural Chinese were for cloth.

In regions that specialized in intensive production of high quality goods for distant markets, such as the Canton Delta, the lower Yangzi River basin, and parts of the North China plain, girls’ labor was clearly essential, and sometimes culturally recognized. At the individual level, was a girl’s labor worth her keep?

Janice Stockard’s analysis of Guangdong delayed transfer marriage, discussed above, describes young silk-reeling daughters as highly desirable family members. I have met women from the cotton-cloth producing Jiangnan and Shandong who fully recognize the value of their youthful work in textiles. In such places, groups of women – whether mother and daughters or voluntary sisterhoods – could easily support themselves by their own efforts. Were girls and women in less economically specialized parts of China able to do so? Sichuan and Fujian informants’ answers to this question about their girlhoods were almost always negative.

“Spinning might feed a girl, but couldn’t provide her with a place to live, land, those things,” I was told. Earnings rates bore this out. In both norm and practice, most women could claim rights to means of production only through marriage. In nearly every fieldsite, however, I found a few women whose earnings in rice or cash sustained a frugal, nun-like independence.

Income from cotton spinning was not high compared to those from weaving or even field agriculture, but small girls could spin long before they were of much use in heavy or more highly skilled tasks. In Longquan, spinning averaged 20 yuan a month for unmarried and 22 for married women, in Suining, 17 and 19. In poor, remote Lezhi where cotton grew well and all girls spun, girls earned 27 yuan a month spinning and married women 24. The rare girls and women who spun in richer (though cotton-poor) sample areas earned 29 and 61 in Mingshan and 22 and 48 in Ba counties. In Emei Shan, girls earned 39 yuan.

and I found no married spinners in that 500 woman sample. At the lowest monthly earnings for full-time cotton spinning a girl could supply her own grain staples, but not offset the total costs of her own keep and dowry. In rare cases where earnings were high, daughters were net contributors to family funds, even adding to family accumulation. Based on the one-jin for one-liang standard, most spinning daughters paid for their food and contributed a little to their own dowry funds.

Was rearing “break-even” daughters irrational, as exasperated Chinese parents often claimed? Were daughters “useless things” that merely drained the patricorporate purse? This is an important question, and one does not have to sell one’s soul to the Demon of Rational Choice to ask it. Chinese parents were empowered to allocate their children’s work and marriages very much as they chose, while at the same time they were obliged by law and custom to channel the inheritance of means of production only to sons. Maintaining a legacy for a son might oblige parents to skimp on the care and feeding of that son’s sisters. “Zhong nan, qing nu” – “Boys matter, girls don’t” – was a description of parental duty as much as sentiment.

The usual language for describing such situations – “son preference” – enfeebles analysis. The decisions of Chinese parents were far more than the wide-open “preferences” that beguile economists, for patrilineal inheritance rights by sons were enforced through the courts. Girls had no legal right to family resources beyond those they consumed while still living at home. The dowry supplied by a bride’s family was a customary privilege only, not a daughterly right; and even the duration of a girl’s residence in (and dependence on) her natal family was widely negotiable.

In many times and places, Chinese developed local forms of marriage practice that treated daughters almost like commodities. Arthur Wolf’s work shows minor marriage as one extreme of this tendency as Stockard’s and Chuang’s work on delayed transfer marriage shows the other. A complex spectrum of marriage forms and arrangements, dowry and brideprice, signalled a hierarchy of women’s statuses from bondservant through concubine to differentially-esteemed sorts of wife. Europe – where inheritance varies wildly, but marriage not at all – contrasts dramatically with China – where inheritance is positively dull, but marriage runs a gamut of exotic possibilities. Might the Chinese

43. We regularized these figures by converting them to rice and using a standard multiplier; they are roughly comparable. A check on this method was to ask how many jin of rice a liang of yarn would purchase; they were generally equivalent.

Incorporating biology into European and Chinese work regimes
A European girl began full-time work later than a Chinese girl. A European bride was older than a Chinese bride, who was usually married off within a year of her first menses. A European wife formed a neolocal marital household while a Chinese daughter-in-law entered lengthy, perhaps permanent, virilocality. The European bore a handful of children very quickly, the Chinese slightly more, but more widely spaced, as chapters in this volume attest. Only the modestly well-off European wife had life-cycle servants, but even a poor Chinese wife usually had a mother-in-law and, soon, some growing daughters to assist her.

The timing of physical development, pre-marital work, baby-care, and post-marital work across the life-cycle is dramatically different at these extremes of the Hajnal dichotomy. The bodily changes common to all women happened to both sets of women at about the same pace. Yet their economic activities, narrowly defined, followed distinctive cultural schedules. Neither life-cycle developmental phases nor historically-constructed norms completely controlled these biocultural interfaces, but female biology across the life-cycle remains key to the interpretation of each political economy.

What life-cycle stages are especially relevant to female work roles? The first begins when the toddler – physically weak, inarticulate, and immature in cognition and sociability – becomes what I shall call the capable child who can help an adult in a sustained way. At age six or seven a child can enter the work force. She will still be weak, but will have fully-developed language and body-management skills, acute eyesight, and some ability to concentrate on a single task. She will be driven by exploratory urges necessary for her full development, so she will have to be socialized vigorously to keep her focused on static and uninteresting activities. A capable child can lighten adults’ workloads and contribute to their success in rearing younger children. Where necessary, such children can shift from absolute burden to positive provider.


46. I am writing an extended treatment that covers not only cotton spinning and weaving but also the spinning and weaving of hemp, ramie, and silk; dyeing; embroidering and sewing; picking tea; processing tea; picking opium; agricultural work outside the home; other crafts; servanting and wetnursing; and in family businesses. This should provide a much fuller picture of women’s and girls’ roles in the late imperial Chinese economy than presently exists.

47. An important debate between Arthur Wolf (1985a, 1985b) and Ansley Coale (1985) about the average completed family size in late imperial China has yet to be resolved.
Ethnographers and historians generally agree that something like the traditional European “age of reason” at six or seven was widely recognized as the end of unproductive infancy. Children’s economic contributions have often begun at about this age.\textsuperscript{48} Almost everywhere, girls begin serious, necessary work before boys, although children of both sexes become capable at the same time. For many reasons, women needing assistance in household work generally turn to daughters before sons. Sons have duties with their fathers or other teachers. Much men’s work is too heavy or too skilled for young boys, so boys are granted more freedom to play. Whether the impetus is primarily genetic or cultural, boys seem harder to socialize for obedience and self-control.\textsuperscript{49}

Chinese girls were usually fully work-capable at six or seven for cotton spinning and many other low-strength female tasks. So were European girls, of course, and they doubtless worked a great deal. Small girls were little use in the dairy, however; and in many families, a life-cycle servant might be more reliable than a child at most tasks. For whatever reason, the cultural image of young girlhood in Northwestern Europe is more closely linked to play than is the Chinese image. While the European girl skates, plays with dolls, and scuffles with other children à la Breughel, Chinese representations of child play show boys far more frequently than girls.\textsuperscript{50}

At six or seven, many Chinese girls were forcibly given a sexualized female identity through footbinding. In interviews, women insisted on the principle that bound feet created an implicit right to be properly married – not sent off as a concubine, bondservant, or prostitute – and to perform only the childcare and home-based work that went with this honorable role. Once bound, girls were much less effective at wading in paddy fields, carrying heavy loads, or doing work – like pushing carts and turning millstones – that required strong foot traction. Four years of near-agony purchased exemption from a present or a future of unprotected waged or bonded work, from porterage and boat-pulling, or from unmitigated sexual slavery.

Footbinding was essentially universal in large parts of China, and the norm for respectability throughout the Han cultural imperium. During the early


years of binding, pain could be severe, but girls were pushed to walk at once, and soon found that their feet ached badly only (!) at night. When bound very small, woman used canes or steadied themselves with a hand on the wall, but this extreme was rare. For the rest of their lives, they walked reasonably well, even for long distances (on pilgrimages, climbing mountains), though at a slow pace. Infections, sometimes acute, were common, but (contrary to missionary views) they rarely crippled girls or resulted in their deaths. Women who had lived while binding was still commonplace denied that footbinding was a health risk, much as they complained of its painfulness.

Restricted by limited mobility and cultural norms devaluing play, Chinese girlhoods may well have been more productive than European girlhoods. From capability to menarche, a Chinese girl owed her elders a decade of diligent and largely unremitting toil.

Menarche ended the phase of capable girlhood. In 1992, I documented remembered age at menarche in Fujian and Sichuan provinces for a sample of 6,000 women over 65. In neither province could industrialization, improved nutrition, or effective biomedicine have had real significance in shaping these women’s lives. In both, the average age at menarche was almost exactly 16. In the context of short, preindustrial life expectancy and early marriage, the girlhood decade of being uninterruptibly work-capable because still infecundable accounted for a huge part of society’s total labor-time.

Marriage almost always followed menarche within a year, the girl tucked into the marital bed as quickly as possible to preclude illegitimate pregnancy. Pregnancy, it was hoped, would quickly bring the new wife out of her bridal liminality into the stable identity of motherhood. As Hajnal made clear, European brides were also eager to begin childbearing; but they were adult women in their later twenties.

Having waited so long to bear children, Europeans bore them more briskly, with interbirth intervals that rarely approached the two-and-a-half to three years between Chinese siblings. Northwestern Europeans had only slightly smaller completed family sizes. We must assume that care for her large, late, rapid-fire brood restricted goods-producing work much more for the European mother than for the more temperate Chinese.

Birth spacing has implications for the mother-daughter relationship in regard to work. With longer interbirth intervals than a European, a Chinese mother paradoxically produced daughterly helpers at a more effective pace. By the time she had borne the third child, on average one of the previous two would be work-capable. The European mother faced either a feast or a famine of useful daughters: with shorter birth spacings, a woman could be caring for several toddlers and infants before her firstborn was able to help with them.

Once a daughter reached capability, cultural expectations about childhood
diligence came into play. As Rosanne Rutten observes, “Whether women can successfully mobilize the labor of their children depends on how the children are socialized.”51 Judith Brown has studied cross-culturally the recruitment of an effective female labor force in societies where women are major producers; she concludes that initiation rites help “instill the proper attitudes towards work.”52 Footbinding dramatically initiates a girl into new disciplinary expectations. European socialization was less demanding, and certainly less powerfully supported by authorities outside the household, as Arthur Wolf (in this volume) makes clear.

Attachment in the psychobiological sense first used by John Bowlby also comes into play as a factor in constructing childrens’ work-lives. In complex combination with cultural factors, early attachment and constructed loyalty motivate girls to do what is asked of them by their natal families. Arguably, a daughter is more emotionally willing to work well than an in-married daughter-in-law, a hired worker, a bondservant, or anyone else available to fill her culturally-specified age/sex role. In both Europe and China, attachment might make a daughter’s girlhood labor especially valuable. But Northwest Europeans drew youthful labor less from their own prepubescent children, and more from other peoples’ adolescents, foregoing the advantages of attached workers.

In the stage of fertile motherhood, what other helpers might the European woman have? Lifecycle servants were not baby-sitters. They had a full assignment of labor to perform, much of it not compatible with infant care. More young Chinese mothers lived with a mother-in-law during the first years of childbearing than did Europeans, mothers-in-law who could combine interruptible tasks with back-packing babies. Production of marketable goods surely fell off during the early years of childbearing for both European and Chinese married women. However, Chinese mothers of young children were better situated than European ones to continue the home-based tasks they had learned as girls. For Chinese wives, motherhood often marked a graduation to yet more skilled tasks, such as setting up warps for weaving, leaving the simpler, more tedious tasks to girls. Did European mothers do the same? In their textile work, they may have done so. Perhaps those who had been dairymaids turned with relief to spare-time spinning and/or weaving as an adjunct to baby care, glad to lay their buttery burdens down. But in terms of returns to labor and personal autonomy, ex-dairymaids may have lost something they valued.

Let us leave these busy wives and mothers to contemplate another biological passage, common to both men and women, but perhaps more significant to women’s than to men’s work. In pre-industrial societies, the presbyopia that often begins in the mid-forties can completely exclude women from fine hand-

51. Rutten, Artisans and Entrepreneurs, 80.

work. Obviously, diminished vision is highly variable; many women everywhere retain good eyesight into late life. On average, however, this falling-off is predictable for a substantial proportion of any population. Cows can be milked without twenty-twenty vision, but women who can no longer see to thread a needle have lost a major occupation.

Short-sightedness has a far more serious effect on the female life-course than does menopause. While menopause affects women's lives in many ways, it usually does not in and of itself affect work. In the absence of any other information about my informants' eyesight, however, menopause will serve as a rough proxy. Women of my Chinese sample came to menopause at an average of forty-eight years of age. If eyestrain from handwork had brought on premature impairment, a woman just emerging from the business of baby-care might find herself unable to return to the tasks of her youth. Assuming that European women too lost visual acuity around menopause, their late and hectic child-bearing regime strongly suggests that, after marriage, many never returned to fine work.

European girls probably contributed less than Chinese girls to household production between the age of reason and the age of menarche. *Meisjes* made their greatest contributions to the extra-household economy in the decade of adult maidenhood. With marriage at about twenty-six, rapid childbearing and housekeeping gave them less time for commodity production for at least another ten years. By contrast, Chinese girls worked hard from capability to menarche, steadily as young mothers, then very productively as managers of a quickly-appearing family workforce of daughters and daughters-in-law.

In neither region were the post-menopausal years likely to have been as important as youth in producing salable goods. To compare culturally-expected lifetime labor totals for women in these two regions, we should look hardest at the decade before menopause. By their late thirties, both Chinese and European wives would have better worker-daughter to pre-capable-child dependency ratios, and the European might have employed a servant or two. Could she now, as a middle-aged matron, make up for the worktime traded previously for playful childhood and busy mothering? Could a final burst of productivity enable her to exceed, or even meet, the lifetime labor totals of an early-married Chinese wife who spread her reproductive burden more manageably over the life-course?

**Guniang, meisjes, and capitalism**

The world wonders why capitalist industrialism first appeared in Northwestern Europe. It is a good question, and it is improved when asked from the reasonable assumption of European oddity rather than from the parochial one of European superiority. Historians who have immersed themselves in patterns of Asian production are increasingly unwilling to take for granted that pre-industrial European production systems were superior to those of China. A. Gunder Frank
insists, indeed, that not just scale but world-class levels of production of goods like textiles were the foundation for the long-enduring supremacy of Asian over European economies prior to industrial capitalism. Such insight, however, does not answer the “why Europe first” question.

John Hajnal proposed the most original hypothesis, one that integrates well with a historical materialist feminism: that the intensive work of life-cycle servanting contributed to the transition. “[T]he mere presence in the labor force of a large number of adult women must have been a considerable advantage to the eighteenth-century European economies.”

Unencumbered at the peak of their strength and energy, women created value in Europe before adding to its population. If lifetime labor totals for Chinese girls and women equalled or surpassed those of European girls and women, however, Hajnal would be wrong.

Rather, we might hypothesize that the capacity of the Chinese political economy to mobilize female labor so productively was one more part – and a major one – of the millennial trend of intensification that consistently opposed the invention and adoption of labor-saving devices. Scholars of Chinese economic history have long argued for the significance and social complexity of this trend. To that argument, I add that Chinese ruling-class management of gender and kinship was essential to its management of markets and critical in protecting its dominant non-market mode of production.

Hajnal’s recognition that marriage regimes are connected to tradeoffs between goods-producing and baby-care, however, points research in a necessary direction. It links the “why was Europe so odd” question to the more focused query, “why were European women’s worklives so odd?” In that form, the question directs our attention to human biology and to the ecologies of production as well as to gender and political economy. Further understanding must be based on fuller knowledge of girls as feeling human beings, as prospective mothers, and as doers of the world’s always concrete work.


Passion, reason, and human weakness: The European marriage Pattern and the control of adolescent sexuality

Jan Kok
**Introduction**

In 1810, in the Dutch city of Haarlem, the unmarried parents August Henning and Margaretha Koster appeared before a notary to draft a solemn document in which they described how they had “courted a considerable time in the prospect of entering into a legal and happy marriage”. However, marriage had to be postponed “due to the difficult times causing the [father] to be without breadwinning or occupation”. Unfortunately, pregnancy had occurred because “a too great passion and affection, coupled with human weakness, had overwhelmed reason”.¹ This simple story epitomizes the tensions intrinsic to the European marriage pattern. Neolocal household formation required spouses to have sufficient means of existence, either through inheritance, savings or income from labor. This implied that, until the era of effective contraception, couples had to refrain from sex, or at least to be very careful. Obviously, the control of fertility through late and non-universal marriage could not function if some sort of sexual abstinence among unmarried youths could not be enforced. The need to restrain adolescent sexuality was made even more pressing by another element of the North-West European household formation system: the circulation of young people as servants. High youth mobility made supervision by the parents inadequate and employers, friends and neighbors had to take their place. In his study on a parish in Kent, Reay observed the workings of the village control on courtship (about 1860). For instance, a woman named Susan Hole testified before the magistrates that she had seen Emma Smith and Alfred Butcher together in a meadow “several times by themselves between 8 and 9 at night” and that she had told them to “mind what they got about”.²

Most demographers agree that, by and large, North-Western Europe has been successful in restricting the bearing of children outside marriage. Illegitimacy did not endanger the fertility control that was realized by restricting nuptiality. In his 1965 paper, Hajnal showed that in 1900, the overall fertility levels of Sweden, a country with traditionally high numbers of illegitimate births, were still no match for the levels of Bulgaria.³ To Hajnal’s enumeration of formation rules of the North-Western European household system we could thus add the principle that procreation by unmarried persons was not tolerated. By studying the history of those who violated this implicit rule, we learn more about the system itself.

As a point of departure, the nature of premarital sexuality in traditional societies has to be understood. For many, sex sealed the mutual agreement to marry and social control mechanisms generally ensured that marriage would indeed take place. Control was exerted on many levels, not only by parents, neighbors and employers, but also by the Church, welfare institutions and secular authorities. Changes in the effectivity of these control mechanisms could lead to increases in extramarital births. However, the risks of illegitimacy were not equally distributed in society. For women with unfavorable prospects in the marriage market, sex may have been the price for gaining a marriage promise from their lovers. This type of bargaining, however, was full of risks. Another Kent villager testified: “she asked me if she was in the family way would I make her a home. I said Yes certainly she then said she was in the family way and I told her to go away”. An abandoned woman having lost her “honor” would face severe difficulties in finding a suitable husband. The double standard encouraged men to have premarital sexual experiences and on the other hand to reject “indecent” women.

In this article, I will review the literature on illegitimacy in European history with the following questions in mind. To what factors can high levels of illegitimate births be attributed? Were these levels concomitant with or were they a threat to the European marriage pattern? To what extent were the forces capable of regulating access to marriage capable of regulating extramarital sexuality as well? We will look at the evidence from three perspectives. In the next section, we will explore the regional differentiation of illegitimate fertility within Europe, on both sides of the famous line running from Triest to Leningrad. Then, we study the explanations presented for the unparalleled surge in illegitimacy between 1750 and 1850. Were the principles underlying the European marriage pattern undermined, did the control mechanisms falter or were these developments actually compatible with the courtship customs? Finally, we look at the numerically important group of unmarried mothers whose pregnancy clearly could not be attributed to the anticipation of marriage. These women bore more than one illegitimate child and a number of these “repeaters” lived in a consensual union. To what extent was their behavior a deviation from or even a challenge to the common household formation rules?

4. Reay, Microhistories, 201.
Spatial variation in illegitimacy in Europe

In 1972, Shorter, Knodel and Van de Walle published a map showing the provincial levels of illegitimate fertility around 1900. Their data were derived from the Princeton European Fertility Project. Similar to the other fertility indices, Ih presents non-marital fertility (standardized for age) as a proportion of the biological maximum realized by married Hutterite women. Because the provincial data in the Princeton Project were most complete around 1900, the map is useful for our purposes. To be sure, from the 1880’s onwards Ih started to decline in most countries. However, a calculation shows that the map reflects the regional differentiation in the period around 1870 as well. Areas with extremely high Ih (+0.1-
o) can be found in central Europe, in particular in Hungary, Rumania and in parts of Austria, with Carinthia in a leading role ($I_h = 0.22$). Also, high levels are to be found in parts of Scandinavia and in particular in Iceland. Relatively high are the levels in Lowland Scotland, Portugal (province of Bragança), north-western France, and southern Germany (Bavaria). Low levels can be found in Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, parts of Italy, Russia and above all, on the Balkan peninsula (Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria).

The illegitimacy index $I_h$ is a very precise measure for the tendency of unmarried women to give birth. However, it does not show to what extent overall fertility was actually influenced by this tendency. In other words, a high $I_h$ need not in itself be a threat to the “nuptiality valve”. Apart from their $I_h$, the contribution of unmarried women to total fertility is determined by their relative numbers (and thus by nuptiality) and by marital fertility. In figure 2, I have recalculated the Princeton data for 1900 in term of the “illegitimacy ratio”, or the percentage of illegitimate births to all births. For the sake of simplicity, I present national means. Obviously, this is not to suggest that spatial variation can be understood in terms of national entities. An illuminating example is Austria. Whereas Carinthia had an extreme ratio of 40.4% in 1900 (and 46.4% in 1870), the ratios in neighbouring Tyrol stood at a modest 7.1% in 1900 (and 5.3% in 1870). The figure roughly summarizes what we saw in the map. Once again, Rumania and Hungary, along with Austria, Scandinavia and Portugal stand out with high levels of illegitimate births. In these countries, the unmarried women’s contribution to total fertility was certainly not negligible. On the other extreme, we find Ireland, The Netherlands and the Balkan countries with very low levels. On closer inspection, we see that Austria and Iceland, although having far lower levels of $I_h$ than Hungary and Rumania, reached higher percentage of illegitimate births. Also, countries with comparable levels of $I_h$ (e.g. Russia and Sweden), diverged widely when it comes to the actual impact of illegitimacy.

Interpretation of the regional variation in illegitimacy in terms of the North-Western European marriage pattern is not a straightforward matter. According to Peter Laslett, the map of $I_h$ in 1900 shows that “in general the west and the north had noticeably less sexual nonconformism than the east and southeast at the outset of the twentieth century”. Given the persistency of regional levels of illegitimacy, he concludes that bastardy is not just another trait

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9. Calculated as $((1-I_m).I_h)/I_f$, where $I_m$ is the age standardized percentage of married women in the population and $I_f$ is total fertility. Source, see reference 7. See also Ansley J. Coale and Susan Cotts Watkins, *The decline of fertility in Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 155.

of the north-western European family system. Michael Mitterauer, in his 1983 study, reaches the opposite conclusion. In his opinion, the countries east of the Triest-Leningrad line were characterized by generally low levels of illegitimacy, which was to be expected given their system of early and universal marriage and their low proportions of unmarried servants. He describes the extremely high illegitimate fertility in 1900 in the areas north of the Danube river as a short-lived phenomenon. The marriage pattern of north-western Europe, however, could go together with either low or high levels of illegitimacy.

Mitterauer’s 1983 book is an impressive attempt at a comprehensive explanation of the regional differentiation in illegitimacy. He carefully avoids the trap of oversimplifying the complex phenomenon of “bastardy”. Because it is still authoritative, I will present a brief summary of his analysis. In Mitterauer’s view, high or low regional levels of illegitimacy can only occur when several inde-

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**Figure 1:** Index of illegitimate fertility and illegitimacy ratio, per country in 1900.


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pendent variables reinforce one another. The most important explanatory variables are religion, systems of kinship and family formation, courtship customs, and labor relations.

Among the non-Christian minorities in Europe, illegitimacy occurred relatively rarely. As for the Jews, Talmudic prescriptions favored high fertility, and thus advocated early and universal marriage which reduced the risk of bastardy. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, official ceremonies of the Christian churches replaced other marriage rituals and religious disciplining of sexuality intensified. An exception in this respect is Iceland, where the Christian ethics never overruled the old traditions. Even among the (Lutheran) Icelandic clergy in the first half of the nineteenth century, 18% of the first-born children were illegitimate, that is, born before the official marriage of the parents.\textsuperscript{13} Between the broad Catholic and Protestant denominations, there were no systematic differences in levels of illegitimacy. Very high and low levels occurred in Protestant countries (e.g. Scotland and the Netherlands) as well as in Catholic ones (e.g. Austria and Ireland). Of more importance were the orthodox revival movements that are to be found in the history of many countries. For instance, in the seventeenth century, Calvinism and Puritanism had decidedly lowering effects on the percentages of illegitimate births in both Scotland and England. In France and Bavaria in the same period, the Counter reformation led to the same results. In Austria, the Counter reformation had a lasting impact on the religious mentality of Tyrol, whereas it hardly struck root in Carinthia. Even centuries later, the former area could be characterized as pious, the latter as indifferent or downright anticlerical. Part of Carinthia’s illegitimacy can be attributed to the refusal of many couples to secure a church wedding. Similarly, regional variation within Sweden can be related to the differentiated impact of the 19th century evangelical reform movements.

Mitteraurer describes the household formation systems to the east and the west of the Leningrad-Triest line in terms of the relative strength of the patrilineal kinship principle. In the East, this principle had led to extended families where labor needs were generally met by family members. When necessary, the family attracted servants from outside, but they were, typically, adopted into the family. There was a high value placed on female fertility and age at marriage was low. These factors in itself explain the low illegitimacy ratios of, e.g., Russia. The Balkan peninsula was characterized by unmitigated patriarchy, traced by Mitteraurer to the fierce competition of clans for scarce pastures. The patrilineal foundations of the clans were symbolically expressed by an ancestor cult (the yearly Slava festival). The strength of these joint families lay in increasing the number

of males. The position of women in these pastoral communities was extremely
subordinate; in Albania they even lost their first name at marriage. Women were
simply supposed to provide sons and to safeguard the family honor by refraining
from all prenuptial sexual initiatives. Draconic measures were taken against
transgressors: women could face the death penalty for a prenuptial pregnancy.

Extended families were not restricted to Eastern Europe. Stem-family sys-
tems existed in, for instance, southern France, where the heir could already mar-
ry when his father still retained headship. These systems were characterized by
low ages at marriage for the heirs and low illegitimacy ratios. When heirs had to
wait for marriage until their fathers retired, ages at marriage were much higher.
In Carinthia, heirs even had to wait until the death of their mothers. However,
many of them already had families of their own before official ownership of the
farm enabled them to marry.

In the distinctly patriarchal areas of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe,
sexuality of unmarried women was strongly repressed. Bridal virginity was cen-
tral to the family honor. On the other hand, popular culture in the North-western
part of the continent was often remarkably tolerant towards prenuptial sexuality.
In fact, in various parts of 19th century western Europe, the majority of first-born
children had been conceived before the wedding.\(^4\) To some extent, this can be
ascribed to the significance of the betrothal, which was only partly replaced (or
not at all, as we have seen in the case of Iceland) by the official wedding. In some
areas of Scandinavia, parents simply waited for the wedding until the popular
season or until they had acquired additional resources. One may surmise that in
these areas, the sexuality of engaged couples was apparently not related to mate-
rial perspectives. However, in a case study of a Jämtland (Northern Sweden) vil-
lage, Marks found that the choice of a partner was based on the capacity to work.
Families could survive on wage labor (logging), combined with agriculture. How-
ever, the inheritance of land traditionally marked the proper wedding and the
legitimation of the children.\(^5\) In many areas of Central and Northern Europe,
sexual rights were given to adolescents, even before of official engagement. Scot-
tish *bundling*, Dutch *kweesten*, Swiss *kiltgang*, and German *fensterln* were all cus-
toms which allowed village boys access to the nubile girls' bedrooms. Girls could
have a succession of these visitors, before finally settling on a marriage partner.
These customs required a strict control by the village youngsters who did not
allow strangers to the girls and who checked up on couples during their nightly
acces rounds of the village. The excitement of customs like these might have

\(^4\) John E. Knodel, *Demographic behavior in the past: a study of 14 German village populations in the eighteenth and

\(^5\) Hans Marks, “On the art of differentiating. Proletarianization and illegitimacy in Northern Sweden, 1850-
compensated for the long period of abstention required of West-European youths.\textsuperscript{16} In periods of stable social relations, these youth cultures did not necessarily engender high levels of illegitimacy. However, in the next section we will see that disruptions of communities traditionally tolerant towards prenuptial relations may be one of the reasons behind the illegitimacy “explosion” in the period 1750-1850. In other areas of Western Europe (southern France, Ireland) parents exerted a much stricter control on their daughters.\textsuperscript{17} In such cultures, the balance was less easily broken.

According to Mitterauer, one of the major causes of regionally high illegitimacy levels were the living conditions of farm servants and (unmarried) day-laborers. In itself, their late ages at marriage increased the risks of illegitimacy. But these risks were further increased by conditions of high mobility and weak control by the employers. Finally, dependent on the proportions of servants living in such conditions, illegitimacy ratios could soar. Mitterauer shows how inheritance customs favoring one heir created large, undivided farms in Sweden, Westphalia and the eastern Alps (for instance, in Carinthia). Particularly in cattle breeding areas, these farms required the continuous presence of servants who lived in large numbers on the farms. The agricultural expansion in the 19th century increased the demand for labor even further. In these areas, there would always be work and a home for an unmarried mother and her child.\textsuperscript{18} In other areas, fewer servants were needed and consequently there was less willingness to take care of an extra infant. Arable farming needed workers on a seasonal basis, and tended to attract married day-laborers. Also, few servants, let alone their children, were needed in wine-growing areas which therefore had low levels of illegitimate births. Likewise, employers of urban domestic servants were disinclined to sustain additional children and kept their subordinates under close supervision.

To sum up, in Mitterauer’s view the European marriage pattern is positively related to bastardy, given a number of preconditions. An important precondition is the culturally determined tolerance towards prenuptial sexuality. Another crucial variable is the relative number and the living conditions of servants, in particular in the countryside. In various countries, we can observe the

\textsuperscript{16} Beck, “Illegitimität und voreheliche Sexualität auf dem Land”, 140.

\textsuperscript{17} A. Fine, “Enfant et normes familiales”, in: Jacques Dupâquier (ed.), 

\textsuperscript{18} See also: W.R. Lee, “Bastardy and the socioeconomic structure of south Germany”, \textit{Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 7} (1977), 403-425; Michael Mitterauer, “Familienformen und Illegitimität in ländlichen Gebieten Österreichs”, \textit{Archiv für Sozialgeschichte, 19} (1979), 123-188.
influence of these factors. In Ireland, repression of adolescent sexuality and a relatively low incidence of service combined to create very low levels of illegitimacy. In the Netherlands, prenuptial sexuality was very common, but it led seldom to the birth of an illegitimate child. The control by parents and the community did not falter, because the population density and the small scale nature of Dutch agriculture prevented hazardous concentrations of mobile adolescents. Also, social policy in the Netherlands actually favored the marriages of the poor, whereas in other countries, marriage restrictions increased the illegitimacy levels (see below). As we have seen, in other areas the scale is tipped towards the opposite side. Carinthia won a leading position in the rank order of European illegitimacy, due to a lack of religious discipline, tolerance of premarital sexuality and strong demand for labor on farms with large numbers of living-in farmhands. One of the salient features of European illegitimacy is its dramatic upsurge in the period 1750-1850 in virtually all areas. In the next section we will see how this has been explained in relation to the European marriage pattern.

**The rise of illegitimacy**

**A sexual revolution?**

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the percentages of illegitimate births (the illegitimacy ratios) were low all over Western and Northern Europe: in England between one and a half and five per cent and in Sweden between two and a half and six per cent. Dutch levels were even lower, but are similar to those in the Flemish and French countryside. During the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, North-Western European illegitimacy ratios doubled or even tripled. In the German parishes studies by Knodel, the ratios increased gradually after 1750 but remained well under five per cent until 1790. They then rose steeply to thirteen per cent in 1820-1829, and declined rapidly from 1860 onwards. Dutch trends followed a similar pattern, albeit on a lower level. In most of the other countries in Europe, the decline did not set in until about 1880.

In the 1970s, the “discovery” of these historical developments triggered off intense debating and hypothesizing about the interrelations between proletarianization, urbanization and changing sexual relations. In recent studies, grand theories are often felt to be inadequate in explaining the highly complex phenomenon of illegitimacy, which can only be fully understood in its local context. As Reay tersely puts it: “Our ignorance about the sexual attitudes and behavior of people in the past is matched only by a desire to rush to generalization”.  

The following summary of the research on the subject can only be such a generalization, lacking the subtlety of many recent interpretations.

In the first interpretations, the rise of illegitimacy seemed to rock the foundations of the European marriage pattern: the links between sexuality and the traditional preconditions for family formations appeared to be broken. In Edward Shorter’s explanatory model, a number of interrelated “strategic changes” undermined the traditional attitudes. These changes were: population growth, the spread of the capitalist market economy, urbanization and the spread of secondary education. Because of population growth, the number of propertyless people increased. In the countryside, the agrarian revolution created employment for many of them. Young workers, on the payrolls of modernizing agriculturalists, formed “youth subcultures”, shedding traditional inhibitions against sex and early marriage. No longer were they restrained by the necessity to wait for sex and marriage until a farm could be taken over. One of Shorter’s followers described their “romantic” life-style lyrically: the workers “revelled in the freedom to love, marry and beget, or just to love and beget”. A large part of the redundant rural labor-force found employment in the cities and their expanding industries. Here, they were liberated from the traditional supervision by relatives and fellow villagers. And here they came into contact with the “urban way of life”. Especially in the anonymous atmosphere of the city, the new “capitalist” values of individualism and self-expression could flourish. These values, also spread by primary education, implied a change in the attitude towards sexuality, because, according to Shorter, “expressiveness means a lot of sex”. In sexual relationships, which often resulted in illegitimate births, young women “emancipated” themselves from the bonds of the family and the village. During the nineteenth century, these urban values spread throughout the countryside, as local authorities lost their powers to have young men and women abide by the

26. Reay, Microhistories, 179.
rules. From Shorter’s point of view, the rise of illegitimacy heralded the “first sexual revolution” in Europe. Sexuality itself changed from a barter between future spouses to a form of self-expression. Shorter’s theories have met with abundant and convincing criticism.30 His ideas clashed with the historical facts on at least three scores. Firstly, the explosion of “bastardy” in rural areas often antedated and surpassed the rise of illegitimacy in urban areas. This severely reduces the explanatory power of “urban values”. Secondly, Shorter describes the transformation of sexuality as an irreversible process. He contends that the decline of illegitimate fertility did not take place until the techniques of birth control reached the adolescents in the late 19th century.31 However, in various countries such as the Netherlands and Germany, the illegitimacy ratios declined already from the 1850s or 1860s onwards. Finally, Shorter can not explain why so many unmarried women should wait for their “self-expression” until they had reached the mean age at marriage. On the whole, parents of illegitimate children were roughly of the same age as parents who were married, even those whose first child had been prenuptially conceived.

Illegitimacy and nuptiality

Table 1 summarizes the results from a number of recent family reconstitutions and shows the ages of unmarried mothers, compared with married mothers, at the time their first child was born. The table shows that a prenuptial pregnancy did not lower the age at marriage very drastically, the differences were at most two or three years. In other words, couples with a prenuptially conceived first-born child had waited for sexuality almost as long as the couples who conformed to the principle of prenuptial chastity. The marriages of the former group may have been advanced due to a “miscalculation” of the marriage options. Another cause may be the somewhat higher fecundity of this group, as demonstrated by Knodel.32 This suggests that, given a certain degree of sexuality within courtship, this group had unwittingly run higher risks than others. Finally, the pregnancy may have been a conscious means of exacting a parental permission to the wedding. At least, Dutch oral history and regional novels point in that direction.33

32. Knodel, Demographic behavior, 236.
Until the end of the nineteenth century, single mothers were not particularly young. Therefore, their (first) pregnancies may have occurred during “normal” courtship. For a number of them, the marriage may have been postponed until after the birth of the child. In the 19th century, about a third of the illegitimately born Dutch (North-Holland) and German children were legitimized by the marriage of the parents. In North-Holland, about two-third of the legitimized children were still below age two. Family reconstitutions show that single mothers who married, did so at a later age than all other women. This implies that they had more difficulty than the prenuptially conceiving women to secure a “timely” wedding.

Assuming that a significant share of all illegitimate births was a result of anticipated but frustrated marriage, we once again ask how the rise in illegitimacy can be explained. In theory, it is most likely that in periods when marriage

### Table 1. Mean ages of mothers at first birth by legitimacy status, Germany, Holland and Scotland in the nineteenth century.

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<td>6 German villages, 1800-1849</td>
<td>253</td>
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<td>6 German villages, 1859-1899</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>243</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 North-Holland villages, 1815-1834</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>253</td>
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<td>5 North-Holland villages, 1890-1909</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>240</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dutch city of Haarlem, 1815-1834</td>
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<td>Dutch city of Haarlem, 1890-1909</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>234</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parish of Rothiemay, Scotland, 1801-1850</td>
<td>262</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parish of Rothiemay, 1851-1900</td>
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34. Kok, *Langs verboden wegen*, 154; Knodel, *Demographic behavior*, 199. For children surviving the high infant mortality rates, the legitimization ratios are obviously higher.
opportunities were restricted, more couples had to postpone a wedding, even when the girl was already pregnant. This suggests a parallel relationship between age at marriage and illegitimacy. However, historical reality defies this simple scheme. On the Continent rising illegitimacy levels were indeed more or less associated with a decline in nuptiality. In England, however, illegitimacy increased along with nuptiality. This remarkable fact inspired Peter Laslett and others to formulate a “courtship hypothesis” of illegitimacy.

The courtship intensity model
English time series (1550-1850) show that illegitimate births and prenuptial pregnancies ran parallel to each other and to general fertility, but inverse to the age at marriage. In other words, when the inhibitions to early marriage were lessened, there was also more tolerance towards pre- and extra-marital sexuality. Apparently, the forces regulating fertility and access to marriage were also capable of controlling sex outside marriage. Favourable economic conditions – especially rising wages – were a stimulus to striking up (sexual) relationships. In such periods, the “courtship intensity” was high, with a normal and inevitable proportion of “accidents” in the form of prenuptial pregnancies and illegitimate births, especially in those areas where tradition permitted youthful boldness in prenuptial relations. On the other hand, when access to marriage was limited, illegitimacy went down. Recently, Jona Schellekens has put the courtship hypothesis to the test in a number of multivariate models. In one model he relates the long-term development of illegitimate fertility (Ih, 1581-1810) to trends in nuptiality and real wages, as well as to changes in communal control and in marriage regulations. A dummy variables was added for the Commonwealth period (1651-60), when Puritan control was most intense and fornication even became a punishable offense. Other dummies were added for the Marriage Duty Act (1695-1705) that improved registration of marriages and for the Clandestine Marriage Act of 1753 that resulted in more children born in common-law marriages being registered as illegitimate. Schellekens’ analysis confirms that the increase of nuptiality (and thus, of courtship) was the major factor behind the rise of illegitimacy in the eighteenth century. When nuptiality is held constant, real wages are inversely related to illegitimate fertility. However, when nuptiality is omitted from the model, the real wage variable does not have a significant effect. According to Schellekens, these outcomes suggest that rising real wages increased the feasibility of marriage and thus stimulated courtship and extramarital conceptions. However, to a certain extent these influences counteracted one another, because

marriage could also intervene more often to prevent children from being born illegitimate.\textsuperscript{38}

In England, $I_h$ rose until the 1860s and declined steadily from that time onwards. Although still consistent with the trends in nuptiality, Schellekens multivariate model for the 19th century indicates that now real wages had become the most important variable. The decline of illegitimate fertility was clearly triggered off by the increase in real wages in the second half of the 19th century. Probably, rising prosperity among the working classes led to a changed attitude towards official marriage. Increasingly, marriage was considered instrumental to establish and defend the newly acquired rights to property.\textsuperscript{39} By the late nineteenth century, the decline of illegitimate fertility was sustained by the dissemination of contraceptive methods.\textsuperscript{40}

The early dependency of a large part of the English population on wages and the lack of a connection between marriage and the (prospects of) property, may explain why the English patterns were so different from those on the continent, or even from those in Scotland. There, the courtship intensity model has no applicability at all.

\textbf{Marriage frustrated}

On the European Continent and in Scotland, the rising numbers of illegitimate births during the second half of the 18th and the first half of 19th century were generally related to declining marriage prospects. Also, the percentages of bridal pregnancies increased. In every instance, this increase was due to those couples that had waited for marriage until the final months of the pregnancy.\textsuperscript{41} In the German parishes studied by Knodel, the rise of illegitimate and bridal pregnancy coincided with a rising age at marriage.\textsuperscript{42} In my own analysis of local variation in Dutch illegitimacy, marriage opportunities appeared to play a leading part. In 23 North-Holland communities in the first half of the 19th century, the female age at marriage was positively and strongly correlated with illegitimacy. Conversely, the marriage rates were negatively associated with illegitimacy.\textsuperscript{43}


\textsuperscript{40} Schellekens, “Illegitimate fertility”, 373; Shorter, Knodel and Van de Walle, “The decline”, 392-393.


\textsuperscript{42} Knodel, \textit{Demographic behavior}, 197.
The rise in illegitimacy is often seen as the consequence of the proletarianization of peasants from the second half of the 18th century onwards. Cottage industries may have cushioned the effects in some areas, but when these could no longer compete with factory industry, the system of “normal” household formation collapsed. For instance in Flanders, the countryside plunged into a protracted depression in the late eighteenth century, due to population growth and the division of agricultural plots. The possibilities for (early) marriage waned: age at first marriage rose to a culminating point in the 1850s. According to a number of Belgian authors, couples increasingly postponed their marriage until the woman was pregnant, and for a growing number of them the wedding came too late, that is, the child was born illegitimate.44 Blaikie traces the unprecedented increase of bastardy of in 19th century Northeast Scotland to the regression of “the opportunities for independent family formation”.45 Expansion by modernizing farmers led to a shortage of tenant holdings. However, laborers and servants still expected to obtain a croft sooner or later, and started courting (and having sex) in that expectation. In the same vein, Marks attributes the explosion of illegitimacy in late-19th century Jämtland to the appropriation by logging companies of the land, which robbed the loggers from the opportunity to obtain their own cottage. As we have seen, the local customs in this area tied marriage to the acquisition of a farm. In the 1930s, when government regulations facilitated agricultural credits, illegitimacy declined rapidly.46

In the coastal districts of the Netherlands, dairy farming retained its small scale character. The rather short-term rise in prenuptial pregnancies and illegitimacy seems to have been caused by the decline of real wages and employment during the economic crisis of the late eighteenth century. The depression was exacerbated by the French occupation during the Napoleonic Wars, which led to a complete stagnation of Dutch shipping. In particular the cities and the fishing villages were struck hard in this period. The available evidence suggests that marital postponement in this period increased the number of prenuptial pregnancies, and thus the risk of illegitimacy.47

The contraction of marriage opportunities has been indicated as the major

43. Kok, Langs verboden wegen, 122, 127.
cause of the rise of illegitimacy in most North-Western European countries. However, this can only be one part of the story. Did not the European household formation system rest on the self-restraint of couples, guarded by various controlling instances? Why had the system become incapable of enforcing the patience and abstinence that was apparently necessary?

**The erosion of control**

In many North-Western Europe families, parental authority was clearly incapable of supervising the behavior of children until their marriage. Not only did children marry at an age when one or both of their parents may already have died, many of them lived in other households, often far away from the parents. Therefore, other persons had to ensure that the community was not burdened by extra children. These persons ranged from friends and neighbors to employers, the overseers of the poor, church elders and magistrates.

Social and cultural changes during the 18th and 19th centuries undermined the network of controlling mechanisms in many ways, although in some areas and periods more intensely than in others. To an important extent, the rise of illegitimacy was caused by the growth of that part of the population that could not be easily controlled. Many studies show that the day-laborers contributed disproportionately to the illegitimacy levels. The agricultural revolution increased the class of day-laborers and servants and diminished their prospects of a cottage of their own. Fewer plots were available for tenants, whereas the declining mortality, itself a result of the new crops (e.g. potatoes), led to an increased age at marriage and to larger proportions of single youths. Demographic pressure ensured that their wages could be kept at a minimum. In search of better labor conditions, workers frequently moved to another farm. On many farms in the modernizing districts, groups of workers were housed in separate buildings. Contemporary observers condemned the mixed housing of workers in these sheds (*bothies* in Scotland) as a major cause of illicit sexual relations. The farmers themselves had lost their paternalist attitude towards their personnel. One Scottish commentator (1903) lamented over “the gradual decay of the community of interest between employer and employed”. While saving money for their wedding, many of the workers were free to have children and to live in some sort of consensual union. Because of their greater mobility, such relationships were often broken up and the women left behind, pregnant or already with a child.

In the same period, the urban middle classes were rapidly expanding both in numbers and in wealth. Domestic servants underlined their new status and


the demand for servants increased enormously. Very often, these girls were attracted from the countryside. The female surplus on the marriage markets of many cities lowered their individual chances. But the specific social position of servants made them even more liable to become unwed mothers. In their search for a marriage partner who could ensure a decent and stable income, they entered courtship and obtained marriage promises in exchange for sex. However, the conditions that ensured a happy ending in the rural context no longer existed. Firstly, their parents could not supervise the courtship and their bourgeois employers certainly would not take their place. In fact, the girls had to be secretive about their relationships. According to Gillis, “the necessity of secret betrothals restricted the kind of public interest and pressure to which courting couples were normally subjected”. 50 Secondly, their relations were frequently ill-matched, either with men above their rank (e.g. employers’ sons), or below their rank (the male servants). Finally, even when they had found “suitable” partners, such as skilled workers, the high mobility of these men often led to disruption of the relation. 51

Another factor to be considered is the gradual decline of religious control on family matters. In Scotland and the Netherlands, studies on the impact of Calvinist discipline in the 17th and early 18th centuries suggest that effective control was reached not in the least because a large part of the population internalized the Churches’ objections against extramarital sexuality. In the Netherlands, the Calvinist Reformed Church called upon the civil authorities to support the fight against fornication. Some authorities imposed a fine on prenuptial pregnancies. But the local churches themselves were in the forefront. In the early 17th century, the Amsterdam Church Council devoted half of its time to matters of discipline, among which sexual misdemeanours loomed large. Sanctions against church members were the public admonition of sins and the prohibitions against taking part in the Lord’s Supper. A close reading of the Amsterdam church records shows that after 1600, prenuptial fornicators became increasingly aware of the sinfulness of their offence. 52 In the first half of the 17th century, church discipline not only rather effectively influenced the sexual conduct of the church members (about a quarter of the population of Amsterdam), but of other groups in society as well.

In Scotland, Calvinist discipline was even stricter than in Holland. The parents of bastards were punished harshly, but married couples as well could not

51. See also Tilly, Scott and Cohen, “Women’s work”.
52. Herman Roodenburg, Onder censuur. De kerkelijke tucht in de gereformeerde gemeente van Amsterdam, 1578-1700 (Hilversum: Verloren, 1990), 241.
get away lightly with a prenuptial pregnancy. In the 18th century, couples had to pay consignment money when they took out the banns. They forfeited the money, when their first child was born within the first nine months after the wedding. In cases of doubt, midwives were called upon to testify on the development of the babies’ nails and their ability to suck. According to Mitchison and Leneman, Church discipline effectively regulated behavior:

We see here a nation learning to contain sexual impulse mainly within the narrow range of opportunity that society made permissible, out of genuine acceptance of religious doctrine. This containment lasted through a period of rapid economic change in the eighteenth century, but did not survive the industrial revolution.53

In the 19th century, Church control was only a shadow of what it once had been. In Scotland, putative fathers were no longer summoned to appear in person before the Kirk Session. Most cases of bastardy were dealt with in writing.54 In the Netherlands as well, 19th century discipline was limited to the female transgressors, at least in the mainstream Reformed Church. Church elders in a North Holland village (1821) were concerned about the moral laxity of the flock, but were aware of the fact that “stern measures would only wreak evil and turmoil”.55 However, in the Orthodox revival movements of the late 19th century, moral discipline would be restored.

Civil authorities of the 17th and 18th centuries often backed up church discipline by outlawing (sexual) relations outside holy matrimony. For instance in the Netherlands, concubinage was a criminal offence that could be punished by a high fee or even banishment. In the 19th century, the separation of Church and state in a number of countries removed many aspects of sexuality from the field of criminal justice. One of the most important changes was that the traditional paternity suits were abolished, in countries such as France and the Netherlands. From then on, the recognition of a child by his father was a purely voluntary act. In these paternity suits, the authorities had made bastard begetters liable for the consequences, meaning that they at least had to pay to support the child. Also, single mothers could try to regain their lost respectability, by demonstrating how their lovers had betrayed their marriage promises. The restoration of honor was very important in subsequent attempts at finding a marriage partner. For the single mothers, therefore, this development certainly increased their vulnerability.

In Central Europe, early 19th century policies aimed against the settle-

ment and the proliferation of paupers, had the counterproductive effect of stimulating illegitimacy. In many areas of Germany, the permission to marry was granted only on certain conditions. The applicants had to prove they had sufficient means to sustain a household. Workers could settle only when the authorities were convinced of the demand for labor. Applicants also had to be of irreproachable conduct. In some places, women who were already pregnant lost the right to marry. Districts with marriage restrictions were also the districts with the highest levels of illegitimacy.\textsuperscript{56} In Switzerland around 1850, cantonal policies towards marriage were very divergent, which according to Head-König resulted in unequal levels of illegitimacy. At one extreme was the canton of Glarus with only 1.8\% of illegitimate births. Here, the judges enforced a marriage in case of pregnancy, even without a marriage contract. At the other extreme with 12.4\% was the canton of Lucerne, where the authorities prohibited the marriages of the poor, even when the woman was pregnant.\textsuperscript{57} In Germany these restrictive laws were repealed in the 1860s out of concern of the staggering illegitimacy ratios. Indeed, the ratios then fell off rapidly.\textsuperscript{58}

To sum up, the slackening of the control on sexuality traditionally exerted by employers and authorities formed a precondition – not a cause in itself – of an increase in illegitimacy. In some areas, social policy actually stimulated concubinage by restricting marriages of the poor.

\textbf{Repetitive bastard bearing}

\textit{The bastardy prone sub-society}

Many family reconstitution studies disclosed that illegitimate births were not randomly distributed phenomena. There were always quite a few unmarried mothers who bore more than one illegitimate child. Also, unmarried mothers often had close kin connections to one another, as mothers and daughters or as sisters. In other words, a part of illegitimacy cannot be attributed to failed courtship or to marriage postponement. Is a high incidence of “repeatership” an indication that the norms underlying the European marriage pattern held no sway in some parts of society? English reconstitution studies showed that the proportions and fertility of “repeaters” were relatively higher during periods with


\textsuperscript{57} A-L. Head-König, “Forced marriages and forbidden marriages in Switzerland: state control of the formation of marriage in catholic and protestant cantons in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”, \textit{Continuity and change}, 8 (1993), 441-465, in particular 459-460.

\textsuperscript{58} L. Abrams, “Concubinage, cohabitation and the law: class and gender relations in nineteenth-century Germany”, \textit{Gender & History}, 5 (1993), 81-100, in particular 85; Knodel, \textit{Demographic behavior}, 195.
high illegitimacy ratios than during periods with low ratios. In the period with low ratios (1640-1739) the proportion of repeaters among unmarried mothers was in many parishes well below 10%, whereas during the period 1740-1839 it ranged from 10 to 25%.

According to Peter Laslett, this finding means that the rise in illegitimacy was caused, at least in part, by the behavior of a specific subgroup of bastard-bearers. Socialization of children within this group with its deviant norms towards sexuality and marriage would continue and spread prostitution, concubinage and illegitimacy. To determine membership of this “bastardy prone sub-society”, Laslett formulated a definition. Members had to be either repeaters, or “singletons” with a connection to other unmarried mothers, bastard-begetters or other “nonconforming” persons.

Subsequent research has confirmed that in other countries as well, repeaters contributed disproportionately to the rise in illegitimacy. In the city of Haarlem (North-Holland) during the first decades of the 19th century, about 22% of unmarried mothers were repeaters responsible for no less than 43% of the illegitimate births in this period of “high” illegitimacy. In the countryside these figures were respectively 15% and 31%. During the period with low overall rates (1870-1909), these percentages declined to respectively 12 and 25 (Haarlem) and 7 and 15 (countryside). Similarly, in the Scottish parish of Rothiemay, repeaterdom boosted overall ratios. Blaikie calculated that during the 1871-1880 decade, “when more than one in four children was born out of wedlock, 46 per cent of the mothers gave birth to 59 per cent of the illegitimates”.

The presence and disproportionate contribution of local repeaters can also explain much of the local variation found in illegitimacy ratios.

Although the numerical importance of repeaters is undisputed, the notion of the bastardy prone sub-society has been widely criticized. Levine and Wrightson stated that the conspicuous kin connections were simply an artefact of the family reconstitution method. The sedentary nature of part of the local unmar-


61. Kok, *Langs verboden wegen*, 154-155. For the German countryside, see Knodel, *Demographic behavior*, 205.


ried mothers made them liable to have all kinds of connections to other village members appearing in criminal records et cetera. In short, it was their visibility which suggested that they formed a special group. Most network studies in which Laslett’s definitions were put to the test, concluded that unmarried mothers had just as much connections to “conforming” villagers than to “nonconforming”. A clearly demarcated sub-society was nowhere to be found. Blaikie even demonstrated that a substantial part of the Rothiemay kirk session elders would have to be included in the “bastardy prone sub-society” following Laslett’s definition.

According to Levine and Wrightson, repeaters were fully integrated in the popular culture, although they were a particularly vulnerable group. Likewise, other authors emphasize that once a woman had lost her “honor”, her chances of a “decent” marriage declined rapidly. The putative partners of repeaters were most often different men, which, according to Blaikie, suggests that casual encounters played a large part in the sexual behavior of repeaters. However, one may also surmise that unstable relationships were their only option. In order to survive, they had to turn to prostitution or to enter into rather desperate relationships, e.g. with married men. Some married an elderly man and ran the risk of soon becoming a widow. One example from the Dutch town of Alkmaar is the unmarried mother Sara van den Brink whose subsequent marriage did not last long. In 1819 it was reported that she had deserted her husband “without any argument, because she simply could not stand his deformed body any longer”. After this, she would once again bear illegitimate children. Because of the cultural value attached to female chastity, illegitimacy could become a cumulative process. Unmarried mothers with their very low prospects on the marriage market resorted to relationships that increased the chances on further illegitimate births. In Dutch towns, they often shared housing with other unmarried mothers in order to pool incomes and childcare. Children raised in such stigmatized families themselves entered the marriage market with low prospects.

In recent studies, objections have been raised against the suggestion that repeaters passively suffered their fate, being “prone” to illegitimacy. Several authors point to the “functionality” of illegitimacy. In the absence of social welfare arrangements, illegitimate children may have been an old-age insurance for

their mothers. O’Neill’s detailed study of a Portuguese hamlet showed that illegitimate children met the labor needs of many extended households. Because these children were by definition disinherited, they had the additional advantage of not being able to lay a claim on the household’s landed properties. Blaikie speculates how the increased longevity of the parents reduced the availability of leases and thus prevented the young from marrying. Elderly couples needed the income their servant daughters could provide, while they themselves took care of their daughters’ children. Indeed, without some sort of arrangement for child care and thus a basic tolerance towards bastardy, repeatership would be impossible.

**Concubinages**

To some extent, repeatership can be ascribed to stable consensual unions. It has been alleged that, among wage workers in various countries, concubinage was a normal stage of family formation. Marriage would follow when the woman was pregnant or when the first (or even second) child was born. Indeed, in countries such as Sweden, betrothal was considered a more important transition than legal marriage. In the third quarter of the 19th century, 40 per cent of Stockholm couples that registered the banns already lived in a marriage-like relationship. In northern Sweden, the actual living together of an unmarried couple was celebrated by a village feast called *skjuta på björn* (shooting at the bear). However, in the same popular culture, the (few) single mothers without stable relationships were forced to wear a *horluva* (whore’s cap).

In other countries, however, the estimations of the incidence of concubinage seems to have been exaggerated. In France, these estimations have been based on the number of illegitimately born children officially recognized by the father or even on those who were born at home (instead of in an hospital). In these studies, concubinage appears as a rather romantic and typical proletarian (temporary) substitute for marriage. However, the statistical measures employed do not reveal the actual households of unmarried parents. My own research using the population registers, show that in the Netherlands concubinage was

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rare, although most confinements of illegitimate children took place at home and at least a third of the children were recognized. In the cities, about 20 per cent of the unmarried mothers appear to have lived in a consensual union. In the countryside, concubinage was virtually absent with only 3 per cent of unmarried mothers cohabiting.\textsuperscript{75}

Recent studies tend to describe concubinage in terms of frustrated marriage. We have already discussed the legal barriers to marriage in Central Europe. In France, these barriers were of a bureaucratic kind. Getting married was a time-consuming and costly affair because of the large number of documents that had to be produced. In particular the migrants, who were especially numerous in Paris, had great difficulties in arranging these documents. Various charitable organizations assisted the poor with the monetary and bureaucratic problems associated with official marriage. One of the most successful was the Société de Saint-François Régis that put an end to thousands of Parisian concubinages. In the period 1826-1854, this society alone was responsible for more than 7 percent of all marriages in Paris. According to Ratcliffe, this proves that legal obstacles, not an indifference towards marriage, were the major motive to cohabit.\textsuperscript{76} One of the reasons why in Holland concubinage (and illegitimacy) were relatively rare, was the fact that throughout the 19th century, the poor could easily procure a document exempting them from the legal dues.

**Conclusion**

In principle, pre- and extramarital sexuality endanger the functioning of the European marriage pattern. Adaptation of the incidence and age of marriage to the availability of economic resources would be meaningless, if procreation outside marriage was common. Some sort of containment of sexuality was needed, because of the long period youths had to wait until marriage and because of their high mobility associated with service. In this article we have seen how the norms underpinning the European marriage patterns were both commonly internalized as well as upheld by configurations of social control. The norms were internalized because sexuality was generally restricted to the final stages of courtship, sealing the agreement to marry. The ages of unmarried mothers and pregnant brides hardly diverged from the ages of mothers who became pregnant after the wedding. In some areas, high levels of illegitimacy can be associated with premodern definitions of marriage, not with a malfunctioning of “Hajnal’s” household formation system. However, social control was crucial in channelling prenuptial sexuality. Its effectivity rested on stable societies with relatively small

\textsuperscript{75} Kok, Langs verboden wegen, 54.

numbers of servants and day-laborers. Also, when secular and religious authorities backed up the supervision by parents, employers and neighbours, the risk of illegitimacy was strongly reduced.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, all kind of changes undermined the effectivity of moral discipline. Control by churches, local officials and employers gradually slackened, which formed a precondition of an increase in bastardy. In some countries, paternity suits were abolished, thus freeing men from the consequences of their absconding. Often, the marriages of the poor were repressed in one way or another, which had the contrary effect of stimulating cohabitation and illegitimacy. One of the most important causes of the rise in illegitimacy was the strong increase in the numbers and mobility of servants and wage workers. Because of their mobility, it became more difficult to ensure that marriage promises were observed in case of pregnancy. Fundamentally, the rise in illegitimacy was caused by the continuity of traditional mentalities in a social context that was undergoing rapid change. This was also evident in those areas where the basic requirement for traditional marriage, the acquisition of a farm or land, could no longer be met. The proletarianization of peasants intensifed the traditional reaction of marriage postponement. Increasingly, marriages were postponed until the wife was several months pregnant or already with child.

The decline of marriage opportunities led women to take greater risks in courtship as well as increased their chances of being deserted. In particular in cities with skewed sex ratios, acquiring a marriage promise by consenting to sexual advances may have been an important female survival strategy. The eventual consequence was the formation of a group of women who had virtually lost all chances on the marriage market. These “honorless” women, having been abandoned by their first lover, entered into a succession of unstable relations and contributed disproportionately to the illegitimacy ratios. Their children may have formed a new nucleus of bastard-bearers and begetters. The conspicuous phenomena of repeatership and “bastardy” networks can thus be seen at outcomes of a protracted period of marriage postponement, that in itself was closely related to the functioning of the European marriage pattern.