



**COST action A 35 Progressore
Programme for the Study of European Rural Societies**

Third Workshop of Working Group 3 – Peasant Societies

Call for papers

**Inheritance Practices, Marriage Strategies and Household Formation in European
Rural Societies**

**Sárospatak (Hungary)
May 15-17, 2008**

I. Introduction

Inheritance systems and the prevailing inheritance practice determined or largely influenced the marriages and household formations of the heirs and non-heirs throughout Europe. The differences between regions are strongly connected with the ruling systems of inheritance (patrilinear impartible or partible, bilateral partible etc.) and the timing of division of the property. A long-lasting general viewpoint has been that, in Europe, for the young couple property was required as an economic basis for establishing an independent household. The inheritance practice and customary law applying to property transfer and retirement were the decisive factors determining the manner and time of acquiring property. There were regions where retirement arrangements (*Ausgedinge*) made possible a pre-mortem transmission of land and property (mainly in Western and Central-European regions), while in other regions the division of the property among the successors generally took place only after the death of the owner and household head (mainly in Central-East and East-European regions). In the latter case it gave rise to more complex households (joint, extended stem, stem family forms etc.) during the family life-course of land-owning peasants, which was directly related to the prevailing inheritance practice whereby male successors generally received equal shares.

Of course, there were great differences in the rights of newly wedded couples and in the degree to which they remained dependent on parents or even on a widowed

mother. In Central- and Eastern-European regions after the owner's death, management of the household was frequently taken over by the widow for as long as unmarried children lived together with her in a single household.

Either impartible or partible inheritance could give rise to many different strategies regarding marriage and household formation, which can be understood by studying the timing of property transfer, the change of household headship and the retirement practices. The individual and/or familiar choices, as well as marriage strategies can only be analysed and understood at the household level and on the basis of personal life-courses, not on the basis of aggregate data. It is of primary importance to understand the cooperation of kin groups, not only within, but between households, since micro-analyses often reveal that households were not independent economic units.

Recent micro-studies on the 'European Marriage Pattern' have proved that the main points of the Hajnal-model should be revisited on the basis of new, nominal and longitudinal datasets. New case studies, local and regional analyses can deepen our knowledge about the interdependence between inheritance, marriage and household formation in European rural societies. Micro-studies can also explore other factors like religion, ethnic identity, clan alliance, kin cooperation, individual choice etc., beyond the economic ones which influenced or determined marriages and household formation in the past.

II. Goals and methodology of the workshop

1. Micro-level approach

We encourage micro-level analyses and local case studies from all parts of Europe. Studies are preferred that pay special attention to the timing of marriage or/and the household formation in relation with inheritance, transmission of land and property or change in the headship of households. It is considered as important to reveal not only the economic bonds, but the cultural differences, social networks behind marriage strategies and household formation. The goal of the workshop is not to verify the Hajnal-model, but we hope that the papers will creatively contribute to the discussion with the results of longitudinal micro-level research.

2. Expanding the field of research

We wish to extend the borders of the examination area beyond the West of Europe and to fully include Central-, East- and South-European regions, which can contribute new data and deepen the overall picture about the connection between marriage, inheritance and household formation in Europe.

3. The examined time span

We welcome papers from all periods, from the Middle Ages to the present when the problem often is how to find a successor to the farm, rather than how to exclude some of the potential heirs.

III. Proposed fields of discussion during the workshop

1. Inheritance systems and marriage strategies: heirs, non-heirs, dependence or independence
2. Social homogamy and heterogamy of marriages: economic, kin and cultural factors
3. Inheritance systems and the formation/forms of households in Europe
4. Inheritance and marriage in regard to individual life-course

IV. Deadlines

1. Deadline for abstracts (400-600 words): September 15, 2007
2. Deadline for finished conference papers: March 15, 2008

V. Selection of papers and the rules of the workshop

Scholars from all parts of Europe are invited to propose papers for the workshop. The abstracts are evaluated and selected by the scientific committee. After the evaluation, 15-16 contributors will be invited to present their papers in English at Sárospatak. The presentations should be limited to 20 minutes. The papers will be pre-circulated to the participants before the workshop. Reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs is possible for contributors from the 22 signatory states of COST A35 (listed at www.cost.esf.org/index.php?id=233&action_number=a35), according to COST rules. The abstracts of conference-papers should be sent to Peter Pozsgai until September 15,

2007 (peter.pozsgai@uni-corvinus.hu and pozsgai.peter@gmail.com, please use both addresses).

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