

Chapter 5:

Kinship and the Family

It is not immediately obvious that kinship and family life should differ significantly between Eastern and Western Europe, either in the past or in the present. The organization of domestic residential units has figured prominently in anthropological studies of the region, although a great deal of this work has focused upon one specific problem, namely the joint family known as the *zadruga* among the Southern Slavs. Further investigation of kinship and the family in presocialist Eastern Europe is valuable for the light it throws on recent and contemporary social structures. It can also help us to realize the inadequacy of a distinction between the *family* groups we see in our own societies, and the *kinship* frame of reference which we tend to apply in non-western contexts.

My main theme is that kinship and residential patterns in Eastern Europe have been much influenced by economic and political forces, including state policies. I do not claim that there is just one long-term evolutionary trajectory at work in Eastern European kinship patterns. The usual source for such speculative hypotheses is the study of kinship terminologies, but these have proved to be a notoriously unreliable guide to the actual content of social relationships. Ethnographic and historical studies of kinship show it to be highly diverse in this region. I begin by considering some evidence of powerful patrilineal corporations in the Balkans, and of the role played by 'spiritual kinship'. I then turn to the controversies over the *zadruga*, the circumstances in which it flourished, and the factors which led to the demise of large-scale residential units. I note some contexts in which large, seemingly 'traditional' households survived under socialism, and also the very non-traditional context of divided Berlin. I am particularly interested in the changing position of women, and in questions such as whether Eastern Europeans are more likely to rely on kinship in situations where their western neighbours would rely on ties of friendship, or associations. Did socialist constraints on free association force domestic groups to bear a heavier social load than they bear in other industrial societies? If so, do the shift to 'market economy' and the promotion of 'civil society' imply major changes for family life in the region?

'Tribal' organization in Albania

Of all the types of social organization represented in Eastern Europe, Albania displayed until recently one of the most distinctive and 'exotic'. Materials dating from before the socialist period reveal, in the highland districts of the north and the adjacent region of Montenegro, a social organization apparently dominated by kinship. Ian Whitaker (1968, 1976) has drawn upon the accounts of Durham (1928, 1985) and Hasluck (1954) to show that, among the Ghegs, village settlements in relatively isolated valleys were ideally composed of exogamous clans whose political relations were regulated primarily by the blood feud. Various offices existed in this system, such as 'chief' and 'elder', but neither these leaders nor any external power exercised effective power in the region. Clans had formerly made alliances through exchanging women, but by the twentieth century the great majority of marriages took place *within* the clan. Where several clans were found in close proximity, an unusual circumstance, exogamous marriages with close residents were not common. There was a strong desire to avoid establishing close ties with, and potential dependencies upon, any other clan group.

In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth the position of women in Gheg society was highly distinctive. They were essentially alien figures, never properly incorporated into the descent group into which they married. Their marriages were arranged without regard for personal feelings, being determined instead by political negotiations to end feuding. Such a resolution often turned out to be no more than a temporary respite, and the woman, although protected from feuding activities herself, was liable to experience extreme isolation and ostracism. One tragic solution, and a recurring theme in Albanian poetry, was to take revenge on the group she married into by murdering her own children. Women were valued as reproducers, particularly when they produced boys, but that was about all: 'sacks for carrying things', as the Albanian phrase graphically put it.

Whitaker emphasizes the over-riding importance of the patrilineal principle in traditional Gheg society, scarcely modified at all by any strong ties on the mother's side. The main features associated with this principle together form a complex which differs radically from Western European norms:

1. Clan organization is the main regulator of political life.
2. Domestic groups are large; a membership of one or two dozen is quite common, and there are cases on record of households with over one hundred members.

3. Domestic groups are made up of patrilineally-related males, in-marrying females, and their offspring. They contain no non-kin.
4. Productive resources, including land, are not held individually or conjugally, but are the joint property either of the large domestic group or some higher-level 'corporation'.
5. Females are valued primarily as reproducers and do not become full members of the group into which they marry.
6. Marriage is a matter for group decision rather than individual choice, and the age of marriage is low.
7. Fertility is high, but so also are mortality rates.
8. There is a strict sexual division of labour and a strong age-determined hierarchy within the domestic group; all members are subordinate to the authority of its male head, though for some domestic purposes the senior female also has some authority.

This ideal-type of 'traditional' High Albania and Montenegro resembles that drawn by anthropologists of numerous preindustrial societies outside Europe. Patrilineally reckoned kinship is found in a great variety of political and economic contexts. It often provides both a blueprint for the ideal social order, and the practical guidelines within which social activity takes place. Among the Ghegs it seems likely that the role of clan organization retained much of its ideological importance long after its practical significance in everyday life had declined. 'Brotherhoods', i.e. local groups of male clan members, had a role in certain economic and ritual activities, but the primary grouping of the Ghegs was the domestic group. It was at this level that feuding was commonly pursued.

The Ghag domestic group occupying a single complex of buildings (not necessarily 'under one roof') usually consisted of several conjugal units. Such groups regularly contained three or even four generations. However, unlike 'stem' families in western Europe, 'lateral' extensions were also common: the families of married siblings continued to reside in the same domestic unit. All members of this extended household acknowledged the leadership of a senior male. He was the external representative of his household and had the power to discipline both the women and the men. This senior male also took charge of economic activities. He organized the work of others and participated himself only in key phases, such as the marketing of the final product. Each household also had a 'mistress' or senior female, responsible for its appearance and for tasks pertaining directly to the house and yard. The mistress was not

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necessarily the spouse of the master. In the interests of economic efficiency there was more turnover in this post, the ideal incumbent being just above child-bearing age but not much older than fifty. The senior male, on the other hand, usually retained his office until death, when either it would pass on to his designated successor or there would be an 'election'. In the event of the latter, the seniority principle was a powerful consideration, but it could be outweighed by other factors, such as an expert knowledge of customary law.

The *zadruga* controversies

The term *zadruga* dominates the literature on the extended family structures of Eastern Europe. In fact, there is no such thing as *the zadruga*. The concept has acquired a certain mystique, though comparable forms of joint-family household have been documented in many other parts of Europe and the world. Philip Moseley has provided a widely accepted definition, one which would also cover the Albanian households described above. For him the *zadruga* was:

a household composed of two or more biological or small families... owning its means of production communally, producing and consuming the means of its livelihood jointly, and regulating the control of its property, labour and livelihood communally. (1940: 95; also 1943: 147)

Such a definition proved fertile as numerous scholars, both western and native, investigated the structures of domestic groups in the Balkans, and especially in the Serbian parts of Yugoslavia. Most discussion concentrated on the size and structure of the group. Although powerful ties of sentiment as well as economic cooperation and ritual celebrations served to bind these domestic groupings together as lineages or clans, the *zadruga* itself, rather than the clan, was the highest level of corporate grouping or, in the terms of Eugene Hammel, the 'minimal effective unit' (1968: 36).

As research proceeded it became clear that not only were there considerable variations between different regions of the Balkans, but frequently the average size of household was relatively small and structures relatively simple. In his examination of medieval records, Hammel found that at any one time more than 40 per cent of all households were based on the simple nuclear family (1976: 111). Twentieth century ethnographic investigations suggest that many peasant informants tend to exaggerate the sizes of their households in the past. When, in addition to basic genealogical data, they are asked to state exactly

when persons had moved away, it often emerges that the phase of extended family residence is quite brief or even non-existent. Given that the very term *zadruga* (which has the literal meaning of 'cooperating group') was a neologism popularized by ethnographers and never much used by villagers themselves, the role of such groups in past domiciliary organization begins to look rather dubious. (The ethnographers' agenda often involved an idealizing and romanticizing of allegedly collectivist characteristics of the culture of the folk.)

If, however, the *zadruga* is approached not as a static form, but as an institution subject to a constant cycle of expansion and fission, it is possible that average household size may remain relatively small, whilst most persons may nonetheless live at least a part of their lives in a multiple-family household. Relatively few *zadruga* may have lasted more than two generations after their founder (i.e. his grandchildren would be likely to initiate a division). However, the conjugal units within a *zadruga* might begin working and consuming separately before its formal disintegration; the property of the corporation might be divided before the separation of the co-resident group; and even after separation the bonds between the former members might remain strong. For all these reasons one should be wary of supposing that the break up of a *zadruga* was indicative of fundamental changes in the patrilineal kinship complex identified above. The continuing importance of the group rather than the individual, the evaluations of men and women, and of high fertility, all remained essentially unchanged through such cycles.

David Rheubottom's work in Macedonia illustrates how the system worked in practice (1971, 1976b). He accounted for the fissioning of households in terms of a basic conflict between the kinship principle (which favoured continuing the larger grouping under the single head) and what he termed the 'task system': factors related to production which stimulated conjugal units to work on their own account. He demonstrated, following closely the native model, how the in-marrying female, as a stranger in the patrilineal group, was prone to experience its tensions most acutely, and how she became '...the grain of sand around which the pearl of division forms' (1971: 149). In a sense the decision to fission was a victory for her, over the solidarity of the males; but it was a pyrrhic victory, since the new household promptly set about establishing another *zadruga*, and the ideal remained grounded in a patrilineal ideology.

To analyse *zadruga* in terms of developmental cycles is still not to situate it properly in history. Other variables are constantly modifying the relationship between kinship and economy: off-farm economic opportunities, the political

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and legal environment, military and demographic circumstances etc. Different factors may have been conducive to *zadruga* forms of domestic grouping in different phases of Eastern European history. In one phase there was probably a strong military-defence rationale for peasants to stay together in an institution which was well suited to pioneering forms of settlement in frontier areas (Mosely 1953). Peasants may have had good reason to prefer larger units, in conditions where smaller ones would not have been viable. In later periods demographic pressures may have constrained families to remain together, despite a preference among their members for separate residence after marriage (see Rheubottom 1976). Much of our ethnographical evidence for the *zadruga* is from the period in which mortality rates had begun to fall, while fertility remained high.

The effects of the state and other 'external' influences on kinship and residence were fundamental. Taxation and land allocation practices might make co-residence sufficiently advantageous to outweigh family preferences. 'Feudal' lords may have preferred to work through authoritative household heads, rather than through more fragmented structures. External influence could affect not only residential arrangements but strike deeper into kinship organization, as when Polish lords required a widow who remained on the farm to remarry (Kula 1976b). The long-term decline of the *zadruga* also reflected a range of specific historical circumstances, among them 'The growth of an exchange economy, the displacement of peasant custom by the written law of the jurists and of the more individualistic town, the spread of new rules of dowry and inheritance ...' (Mosely 1943: 147). New state systems and their legal codes did not respect corporate ownership and declared that all individuals were by law entitled to a share of the patrimony. The position of the household head weakened rapidly in such circumstances, at least in those areas where new legal codes could be effectively implemented. Individuals might squander their share in the taverns (hence the Jewish tavern-keepers were often blamed for the decline of the joint family), or demand it in the form of a one-way ticket to North America. Others were able to find new income sources closer to home, or to take up money-making activities within the household, all of which undermined its previous communal character. More and more of the *zadruga*'s property, including additional land purchases, came to be held by individuals or conjugally. It became common to divide the communal property as soon as the head died, or even earlier, by pre-mortem inheritance along the lines already general in Western Europe. Women began to receive dowries directly, and to inherit land in their own right. Yet despite rapid changes of this sort in

later nineteenth and early twentieth century Eastern Europe, many *zadruga* were able to 'adapt and survive' (*ibid.*), and the effects of patrilineal ideology on the peasant value system remained strong. This legacy should not be underestimated, even after joint families as co-resident corporate bodies have gone the way of the clan.

In all these debates it is important to remember that the source materials available to historical anthropologists and demographers usually do little more than list the members of a settlement, without providing enough data for genealogies to be reconstructed and life-cycles simulated. Historical records seldom specify whether a group apparently sharing the same dwelling also organizes its production and consumption activities collectively, or whether some or all of these take place on the basis of smaller (conjugal) units within the extended grouping. Plakans (1982) has highlighted the bias towards analyses of household size and structure, and the failure in most research to shed much light on kin relations *outside* the household. He summarizes as follows:

We still do not have, for most of Eastern Europe or for the Russian area, a cluster of local studies about which it could be said that in them, researchers have gone as far as the sources allow on questions of kinship; nor are we at all close to understanding what long-term changes in kinship principles and practices might have taken place, and how these changes might be periodized. (1982: 55)

Spiritual kinship in the Balkans

To appreciate the pervasiveness of patrilineal ideology, it is also useful to consider 'fictive' or 'spiritual' kinship in the same region. The work of Eugene Hammel (1968) shows the institution of godparenthood (*kumstvo*) to be a complementary principle of social organization, ranking clearly behind primary patrilineal links and affinal links. According to Hammel's analysis, in most Balkan societies the link with the mother's side was not avoided, as in traditional Albania, but was positively institutionalized. The link of *kumstvo* was also made more formal, without any canonical basis, through being inherited in specific ways. The central question addressed by Hammel is whether godparenthood in the Balkans should be understood as an enduring relationship between groups, or whether, as in other Mediterranean societies, it should rather be seen as the product of dyadic relationships between individuals. He finds that *kumstvo* is a relationship in which individuals

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participate by virtue of their membership in groups. There was a strong desire, intensifying in modern conditions, to seek sponsors who commanded higher prestige. These hierarchies sometimes had an ethnic dimension, such that Gypsies would look for sponsors among Vlachs, Vlachs among Serbs etc. But this hierarchical element did not undermine the control concentrated in the patrilineal group. Hammel presents materials which show how godparenthood functioned as a 'currency' in resolving disputes with other groups. Other currencies were available, such as throwing a feast, or proposing a marriage. The precise course to be followed would depend on the gravity of the situation and on the relations desired in the longer term. The ties of godparenthood generally implied a greater social distance than affinal ties, but they lasted longer. In areas where patrilineal relations were still strongly maintained, the tendency to employ *kumstvo* was weaker. In contrast to the single, patrilineal channel available to the Albanian Ghegs, elsewhere in the Balkans affinal and ritual relations offered 'structural alternatives' for the conduct of social life. But there was still no doubting the primacy of the patrilineal principle, and *zadruga* units formed the groups which actually maintained the ritual ties of godparenthood. *Kumstvo* helped to smooth relations between groups in political fields where the blood feud was inappropriate. It has not died out, though it may have lost much of its 'group' aspect in modern urban conditions (cf. Simic 1973).

Demographic transition and peasant adaptive strategies

The institution of godparenthood in more person-centred forms is found in many other parts of Eastern Europe, including regions which have little in common with the Balkan societies discussed so far in this chapter. In some areas there has been rapid transition, under strong economic pressures, towards kinship systems and residential arrangements which resemble more closely those of Western Europe. Transdanubia is a predominantly agricultural region of Hungary, bordering on Slavonia in the south, and Austria in the west. As the feudal economic system disintegrated in the later nineteenth century, this region witnessed the rise (to become the dominant pattern in many villages) of the one-child family. It has been expertly documented by Ildikó Vásáry (1989), who presents it as an extreme reaction to economic constraints by peasants who were fearful of suffering a decline in their social status through having to divide their property among several heirs. This motivation is quite clear in surviving documentation of marriage contracts. Marriage was often late, and patrilocal norms were largely abandoned as men moved in to farms where a female stood

to inherit. Some sources suggest that the power of the woman, both inside and outside of the house, and regardless of whether or not she had moved at marriage, was very great, even exceeding that of her husband. Certainly she wielded some domestic power, since she was responsible for avoiding conception after her first child was born, and for aborting any unwanted children.

The implications of such a change were radical. One birth per woman is clearly insufficient to reproduce the population, and shortages of labour became apparent in the areas where the system was practised. They were met by an inflow of migrants who, in taking up labourer or proletarian positions, sometimes joining the coresident group, introduced changes into the social structure. They also transformed the confessional structure, since most immigrants were Roman Catholics, while the one-child family was especially conspicuous among Calvinist Protestants. Vásáry is able to establish good positive correlations for the one-child family, both with the size of the landholding and with the Calvinist religion. The linkage of godparenthood (*koma*) was valued by these Calvinist families as a means for maintaining close alliances with others of their own kind, alliances which mattered all the more as their kin networks contracted and they were swamped by Catholic immigration.

This area of Hungary displays virtually none of the characteristics of the Gheg Albanian kinship system. Even marriage patterns and the most basic aspects of gender inequalities have been altered in the direction of modern western systems, with their bilateral kinship organization and an emphasis on the equality of individuals irrespective of sex, rather than on any collective groupings. The causes behind this pattern seem to lie in the demographic and economic background. When the one-child family became common towards the end of the nineteenth century, Hungary was far advanced in its demographic transition. Mortality rates had fallen sharply since the beginning of the century, and without action to reduce fertility, either the family's standard of living would have fallen or some members would have been forced to migrate. In the economic circumstances of Transdanubia, and Hungary generally at the time, there were few prospects of finding suitable work off the land. Hence the 'rationality' of the solution chosen. An alternative line of explanation might attribute the development of the one-child system in Hungary to the fact that the Hungarian kinship system was not Indo-European, and differed radically from other patrilineal systems in the region. However, evidence suggests that the early Magyars, like most nomadic societies, were also strongly influenced

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by patrilineal kinship. After their settlement in Europe nuclear families were the main form of residential group, as in most other parts of Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages. Later, extended forms became more common in Hungary, possibly under the influence of Slav neighbours, but also arising out of economic pressures and political interventions similar to those experienced elsewhere. *Zadruga* were common in and around the very areas where the one-child family developed later, and Hungarian peasants even borrowed the term *zadruga* to label such joint families. Overall, then, in explaining Transdanubian Hungary it is more profitable to examine changing economic and demographic conditions than to indulge in romantic speculations about the special influence of Finno-Ugrian kinship terminology.

In other parts of Eastern Europe the demographic transition proceeded differently, and there was a considerable lag before a decline in mortality rates was followed by a decline in birth rates. Styś (1957-8) discusses a Polish case in which families which owned more land, instead of seeking to preserve that property by restricting the number of heirs, felt able to have more children than their poorer neighbours. One cannot assume uniform modes of response to similar changes in demographic circumstances and economic opportunities. Subjective perceptions of those opportunities could be very different, influenced by political and economic contexts, and also by differing cultural traditions, including religious traditions.

The work of Frances Pine (1988) provides an instructive comparison with the one-child family strategy in Hungary. Pine analysed both historical and contemporary materials from an upland village in southern Poland which she called Tymowa, on the edge of the Górale district. She noted the constraints placed upon this peasant community by the wider society, especially in the economic field, but concentrated her analysis upon adaptations made within the community during the present century. She showed that the household in Tymowa could not be considered, as it so often is in models of peasant economy, the 'sole unit of production and consumption'. The production groups which contributed to the survival of 'core farms' through time were regularly recruited from several residential units. Neighbourhood ties, affinal links, and ranking considerations all came into play alongside kinship relations. Social hierarchy in Tymowa was carefully maintained, with the owners of large farms meeting their labour needs by incorporating non-kin into their households, and not allowing their core farms to fragment. Various strategies were pursued towards the latter goal, including the contraction of close marriages, contrary to church ideology. The villagers' ideals of equal inheritance

(at least for brothers) were frequently contradicted in practice. Pine showed that non-kin had been important elements in peasant domestic groups for a long time. In recent decades, household members who were not in line to take over full-time farm operations had been obliged to seek work in socialist factories, but there was nothing really new in this development. Many peasant sons and daughters had been similarly directed away from the farm in the pre-socialist period, in order to maintain viable farms and to preserve status hierarchies.

In a forthcoming recent article, Pine has suggested that these adaptations can be illuminated by Lévi-Strauss's concept of 'house societies'. Intended to designate a form of social organization that is neither dominated by kin relations nor effectively regulated by the modern state, Pine argues that this idea may be applicable to many other marginal regions of Europe that have remained, even late in the twentieth century, only weakly incorporated into states. In such regions, patrilineal clan organization has given way to a bilateral kinship system that is

... articulated in such a way that the house and land take on some of the characteristics of the lineage, and in themselves act like lineages which have been divorced from any overriding principle of descent. In a way, it is not the people who accumulate their land, but the house and the land which can be seen as recruiting their people (forthcoming).

Land in Tymowa is referred to by 'housenames', which often differ from surnames, and Pine goes on to investigate several mechanisms of house reproduction: these include fictive kinship, and marriages with close kin to consolidate or regain property.

Pine has also examined enduring hierarchical relations within households and within the kindred. The main principles at work here are those of generation and gender. Age seniority has remained significant, though it was modified by opportunities in the socialist wage economy, which placed more purchasing power in the hands of the young than had been the case in the past. Beliefs and ideologies surrounding the categories of male and female in Tymowa society showed much continuity, with male superiority clearly affirmed in various ways. There was a high incidence of alcohol-associated domestic violence, which Pine found was up to a point tolerated, and even expected, by women. Among the factors contributing to these patterns of behaviour were continuing high birth rates, as in most of rural Poland, and strongly entrenched cultural ideas about the control of female sexuality in marriage.

Large households under socialism

In some areas of Eastern Europe the demographic transition and associated changes in kinship and residential patterns were completed before the socialist period. Yet, in a curious way, socialism served to perpetuate and even to revive seemingly 'archaic' family structures. Here I note two examples of such continuity. In the first, as in Pine's Tymowa, the fundamental processes of demographic transition have not yet been completed and, given the presence of large extended households, it is worth enquiring how many other items from the Ghég ideal type have also survived. In the second example significant modernization has taken place, but specific socialist patterns of development have invested the extended family with continued significance as a residential grouping and a primary group in society.

C. J. Grossmith (1976) studied an area containing twenty-five Albanian villages in Macedonia, close to the city of Skopje, and subject to strong urbanizing tendencies. Joint families seem to have persisted more strongly in the Albanian inhabited areas, a tendency that is confirmed in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. In the community studied in detail by Grossmith, one third of the total population lived in households containing two or more married brothers and their families. This co-residence involved close economic cooperation and the pooling of incomes, even when members were engaged in quite separate activities. Thus a migrant labourer in Western Europe would send his earnings home and acknowledge the authority of the household head, who was appointed according to seniority. The patrilineage might be widely scattered, but genealogies were closely observed. People did not converse openly with stranger members of another clan, though there might be substantial cooperation with affines (e.g. in providing services at below market prices, or giving them first refusal when disposing of land). More generally, the values of these communities seemed to accord closely with long-established patrilineal norms, and a pre-eminent concern with respect and honour resonated strongly with that reported from other Mediterranean societies.

One factor in the persistence of these groups and these values was the Moslem religion: an emphasis upon secluding women in the household was an important part of their group identity. In contrast to other groups in socialist Yugoslavia, Albanian Moslem women did not work outside the household. Indeed, unlike other Albanian women in Yugoslavia, at the time of Grossmith's fieldwork those in Macedonia were not even allowed to take up handicraft or other sideline activities in the home. (Women in the Kosovo region retained

money they earned in this way, and this possibility, at a time when all male earnings went into the common pool of the *zadruga*, often contributed to the demise of such groups; see Erlich 1976.) Lacking all alternative opportunities, Moslem women had to produce large numbers of children, even in households which had attained a degree of prosperity as a result of males' participating in the wage economy. The birthrate in these villages was more than double that of their Slav neighbours. Thus Grossmith concluded:

As long as an Albanian is group-oriented, rather than individually oriented, that is to say, as long as his household's prosperity comes before his own, Albanians will maintain a high birthrate in order to provide household manpower in both rural and urban areas. (1976: 243)

Other factors under socialism also tended to generate more complex forms of domestic grouping than those found in most contemporary western countries. Roger Whitaker carried out fieldwork in Bulgaria in the mid-1970s and relied mainly on sociological techniques such as the questionnaire. His work is of particular interest since the main village he investigated, Dragelevsty, had been the subject of an earlier monograph (Sanders 1949). When Irwin Sanders carried out his fieldwork in 1934 he was told that the *zadruga* had died out in the last decades of the nineteenth century. But Sanders' own census data, as reported by Whitaker, showed that 60 per cent of households contained three generations or more: clearly it was the 'laterally extended' *zadruga* which had disappeared, and family size at that time was still comparatively large. Forty years later, in the mid-1970s, half of all households were still extended vertically, to include three generations. Whitaker argued, partly on this basis, that 'strong patriarchal familism' had survived in Bulgaria, despite the sweeping changes which had taken place in society, and especially in the field of production relations. The claim seemed all the more impressive since during the socialist period Dragelevsty had been transformed from a conservative peasant village into a suburb of the capital, and most of its inhabitants commuted twenty minutes on the bus to Sofia to work. The proportion of three-generational households was even higher in a more isolated area that Whitaker investigated in an attempt to provide a control for his main study.

In looking for the reasons for the persistence of this extended pattern Whitaker noted, first, that it did not necessarily reflect the preference of family members, but arose from the very high cost of either purchasing or building independent accommodation. The socialist states did not invest adequately in housing, and in this sense East European domestic arrangements were just as

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significantly influenced by the political priorities of powerholders as were the domestic groups of the past. Second, Whitaker examined the transformed role of women in contemporary Bulgarian society. He identified contradictions between the socialist ideal of full equality of the sexes, and a reality in which the government was unable to provide the material conditions and social amenities to enable the goal to be implemented. Thus almost all women of working age were gainfully employed outside the home, and this economic activity had positive effects on the status of women. It was associated with a drop in the birth rate, and it also meant that men played a greater part in socialization. (New institutions such as kindergartens also played a major role.) Yet, in examining the details of the sexual division of labour in the home, Whitaker found that, despite new commitments outside the home, women's tasks in the home had remained as great as ever. He suggested that:

... the underlying cultural definition of the woman's role in the home has not been seriously eroded by administrative measures or by the sincere ideological efforts of authorities to exorcise a spirit of male domination in the home that has been in the making for centuries. (1979: 269)

In the absence of any other solution, the working mother solved her dilemma by becoming dependent on her parents or her husband's parents for help with the children, and with general household maintenance. This was often most easily arranged if the couples resided together: hence the high proportion of three-generational families.

Not captured in crude indicators of residential patterns are the many other ways in which close family ties were stimulated by the socialist institutional context. These patterns were by no means limited to Bulgaria. Thus it was common for families which resided separately still to visit daily, and to share a common kitchen for their main meal (often carried home in thermos equipment from the canteen of a socialist workplace). The official retiring age was younger than is usual in the west, and older persons generally had more time available. Younger couples did not earn enough to be independent, and there were other, very basic reasons in most socialist economies for not aspiring to any high degree of household economic autarchy. Recurrent shortages dictated dependencies: whenever a deficit item appeared, you bought as much as you could in order to have resources to exchange for other deficit items which neighbours and friends had managed to acquire (cf. Wedel 1986). Consequently, as Whitaker concluded in the Bulgarian case:

In a curious way, policies designed to individualize labour and to break down the functions of traditional patriarchal familism have simultaneously created a situational dilemma for working couples and parents which perpetuates the function of strong familial dependencies, especially the three-generation household. (1979: 270)

Kin, state and nation in Berlin

For a study that contrasts in almost every possible respect with the account of Ghég society summarized at the beginning of this chapter, I turn to John Borneman's analysis of Berlin (1992). The fieldwork for the study was conducted in the late 1980s, in both the eastern and the western halves of Germany's erstwhile capital. Central to Borneman's project was the relation between state and subject. A detailed investigation of life courses brought out sharp differences between east and west, as well as between first and second generations on either side of the wall. Borneman uses sophisticated narrative methods to elicit different styles of state 'entrapment': romantic and idealistic on the East German side, 'satiric' on the West German. The contrasting styles are of course linked to political and economic factors, the Utopian socialist programmes of East Germany proving altogether less efficacious than the *Wirtschaftswunder* in the west.

Borneman argues that neither of the two German states had the ability to 'totalize experience', but each in its own way exercised control over symbols and the 'ideational framework'. The point is elaborated with regard to marriage, seen as the institution *par excellence* where individual and state strategies interact. Borneman isolated twenty different types of marriage from the narratives he heard in Berlin. Each state tried to impose its own classifications, and each changed significantly through time. State classifications functioned to regulate subjects and to demarcate them from outsiders. The 'control police' of West Berlin were particularly strict in implementing the legal code, notably in their invasions of the domestic space of persons suspected of contracting marriages of convenience in order to acquire residence permits. However, the empirical examples of marriage types showed that the states' models, and indeed the general western folk model of marriage, were contradicted by the practices and tactics of Berliners.

States aim to generate a kind of extended kin-group, a sense of belonging to a community or common nationness, and according to Borneman there is no

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doubt that Germanness was experienced very differently in the two Berlins. Throughout the cold war years, people defined themselves primarily in relation to the 'other' across the wall. However, by the end of the 1980s a convergence and even fusion had come about as East Germany, in effect, capitulated and accepted West German definitions of kin. These developments contributed to the later political changes and the emergence of a 'united Germany' which again has Berlin for its capital: but it is clear that this new state has inherited two distinct nations, and that it will take some considerable time and further symbolic work in the field of kinship and marriage before a genuinely unified nation emerges.

After socialism

Kinship, family and the position of women have undergone further changes in the Eastern Europe of the 1990s. There is a wide measure of agreement that women have been among the chief casualties of the shift towards 'market economy'. They have disproportionate experience of redundancy, and because of their domestic roles they have suffered most from the withdrawal of a range of state welfare benefits such as childcare and kindergarden provision. In some countries economic conservatism has combined with religious conservatism, notably in Poland where new legislation has withdrawn the rights to abortion which women had obtained under socialism.

In theory, the shift to market economy is accompanied by the emergence of 'civil society' – in other words, of a society in which a rich web of associations mediates between individuals and families on the one hand, and the state on the other. In theory, this civil society should obviate the need for individuals to manipulate kin and other interpersonal networks. In a market economy it should no longer be necessary to rely on family and friends to gain access to goods. Unfortunately, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that 'the transition' is not in practice being regulated by rational, universalistic criteria. The scramble for property has seen many members of the old élites successfully exploit their connections in translating their 'political capital' into the economic variant. One does not have travel all the way to Albania to hear allegations of 'clanship' in the current turmoil (cf. Stark 1990). In Albania itself the language of clanship is pervasive: everything depends on your personal connections, which creates difficulties for those engaged in the construction of civil society according to western blueprints (Sampson forthcoming).

In more diffuse ways the quality of family lives may now be changing and there may be greater convergence with the modern west. As shortages of goods are eliminated, the importance of personal networks for basic provisioning is reduced. Frances Pine (forthcoming) has suggested that the rural household, the key unit of production and consumption under socialism, has lost some of these functions in the new context. On the other hand, she has found that urban women may be forced back into household forms of production when they lose their factory jobs (1994). One may become *more* dependent than previously on one's close kin and trusted friends for information about increasingly scarce work opportunities. Housing shortages will continue for the foreseeable future to impose very severe constraints on residential options. Overall, there remain many continuities with the main trends of the socialist period.

The uncertainty and confusion brought by the collapse of socialist governments may also have given a renewed lease of life to patrilineal ideologies. In a provocative paper, John Borneman (n.d.) has suggested that the upsurge of fighting in the former Yugoslavia, ostensibly in the name of a national group, can be traced back to patrilineal values and the defence of territory. Ideas of gender dominance underpin Serbian aggression and are graphically illustrated in their soldiers' violent treatment of women belonging to enemy groups. In some parts of the region these ideas and values seem to have changed little over the centuries, whether the setting be a Gheg clan, a *zadruga*, or post-communist civil society. However, as always it is dangerous to generalize. In other parts of Eastern Europe it seems clear that, despite some reversals in recent years, the socialist period did accomplish a very major improvement in the position of women, such that a full return to older patriarchal norms has become an impossibility.

Conclusions

Although some analysts have attempted to formulate a fairly sharp east-west divide, notably Hajnal (1965) with respect to marriage patterns, it is difficult to see Eastern Europe as having distinctive set of kinship characteristics. There is no unilineal path from the corporate clans of traditional High Albania to the one-child families of Transdanubian Hungary and the post-modern spaces of divided Berlin. We have seen that all use of historical records and archaeological data to support evolutionary theories is fraught with danger. In terms of domestic residential patterns we know that changes can take place quite

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quickly due to demographic forces, such that *zadruga* arrangements may sometimes be no more than a temporary and expedient deviation from a residential norm based on the nuclear family. Even where the joint family was a more enduring feature and central to the ideology of kinship, it is still necessary to explore the effects of demographic changes and of differentiating factors in the natural environment, not to mention the economic and political environments. It is important to extend the focus from domestic groups to kinship relations and interpersonal relations more generally, and to see all these relations as forces in society.

The substantial divergences to be found within Eastern Europe are only to be expected. Mountain regions, such as the Albanian 'tribal' enclave, will often reveal distinctive social structures. However, it should not be assumed that mountain areas are necessarily the most resistant to change. Among the Carpathian Hutsuls there was more freedom in the choice of marital partner than was found among neighbouring groups. Although the joint family was the main form of residential organization (and might therefore be interpreted by some later historian with access only to land and parish registers as a primary cooperating group), in reality its constituent conjugal units managed their affairs quite separately. In Moldavia and Wallachia the joint family as a household form seems not to have been significant at any time in recorded history, even though joint ownership of resources was embodied in the institution of communal villages (Chirot 1976). These villages functioned in much the same way as the *zadruga* functioned in other parts of the Balkans. The main reason for dilution of descent group organization here may, here and elsewhere, have turned on the greater ethnic mixture of the region. At any rate, the descent group seems to have yielded to a residential group, a development that took place only much later in other parts of the Balkans, when *zadruga* groupings themselves declined (cf. Sanders 1939).

The evidence suggests that much of Eastern Europe was tending to move in the 'western' direction as demographic transition was completed. However, in many less developed parts of the region this trend was still weak or non-existent prior to socialism. The imposition of socialism had the general effect of emphasizing the importance of family ties, particularly for pragmatic reasons in economies of chronic shortage. The transition to new forms of social organization has lifted some of these pressures, but in other respects the contexts in which kin and interpersonal relations operate in Eastern Europe remain significantly different from the west. An extreme neo-liberal variant of capitalist transformation may now be giving a further boost to the patriarchal

values which have persisted throughout many complex changes in domestic and residential arrangements.

Further Reading

Works dealing with kinship and the family specifically in Eastern Europe are scarce. General discussion of the wider European context can be found in Mitterauer and Sieder (1982) and Laslett and Wall (1974). Halpern and Halpern (1977) provide detailed insights into changing kinship patterns in rural Serbia, while the most recent contribution to *zadruga* debates is Todorova (1994). The changing position of women in recent years is discussed in Wolchik and Meyer (1985), Rai, Pilkington and Phizacklea (1992) and Einhorn (1993). Shlapentokh (1989) and Kon and Riordan (1993) give many useful insights into sex, love and marriage in Russian society.



Plate 3. The Author's Hungarian Landlady (1977)

Rozália Máté Tóth 1905-1993; she was the daughter of one of the first migrants to Tázlár and a member of the established middle peasantry, whose family lost nearly all its land in the 1950s.

