Why Europe

The Medieval Origins of Its Special Path

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The Conjugal Family and Bilateral Kinship: Social Flexibility through Looser Ties of Descent

The concept of the hide as *terra unius familiae* solidifies a relationship between the family system and the agrarian system. The organization of the early medieval Frankish manorial system was, as we have seen, strongly, if not definitively, affected by new forms of agriculture. True, innovations in the agrarian economy inadequately explain innovations in the agrarian system. Nor is it any easier to interpret villa and hide systems as the sole determinants of new structures in family and kinship systems. Religion appears to have greatly influenced the organization of traditional family and kinship patterns the whole world over. It was precisely during the early Middle Ages that expanding religious communities created large-scale unifying trends in family life that manage to resonate to this day. This can also safely be said about Islam. In the Far East at the same time, there was a renewal of Confucianism and of its particular notions concerning the family in China, which were adopted in neighboring cultures. And we might ask as well how strong the effects were of early medieval Christian missionary work on family and kinship in Europe, particularly in places where a special social dynamism was at work. The family therefore seems to be

an eminently suitable topic for an analysis of phenomena linking diverse causative factors in a cross-cultural comparison.

We owe a debt to the records kept on the great, emerging Carolingian monastic estates, which yield fundamental data for a relatively large population group on how peasant families were composed. The most important source is the so-called *Polyptichon Irminonis*, the property register (or polyptych) of the imperial abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés near Paris, dating from 825 to 828. It includes 1,378 peasant households totaling 7,975 individuals. An analysis of the makeup of the households brings interesting trends to light.[1] The vertical extension (that is, over generations) of the household is strikingly limited. Of the 3,470 women recorded only 26 were mothers of *mansus* peasants; among the male members of the peasant household there was not one identified as a father. Families extending vertically upward therefore played a minimal role. The same holds true for those families extending vertically downward: only two grandchildren of *mansus* peasants can be clearly identified. It is evident that this dearth of multigenerational families was intentional. The stem family was almost completely absent as a type, since the criterion of patrilineal descent was probably of no consequence for the family structure. The lateral, or horizontal, extension of the household was by no means restricted to brothers. It might have included a sister's spouse marrying into the family, but the people primarily involved were not related. We do not find a basic family composed of men related through patrilineage (these are also called agnates). Farmhands and maids who were not related to the peasant seem to have formed a significant group within the household. We may surmise that they would move between *mansus* and villa and also between smaller and larger *mansi* as well.

The organization of work was obviously a prime need that determined the makeup of peasant households. This is evident in the high percentage of married couples among farm owners. The two central roles of a peasant and his wife had of course to be filled, always. As the amount of arable farmland increased, the number of household members grew apace. To cover all the particular tasks was obviously the key criterion, not the coresidency of a descent community built on everyone's being related.

We can identify very similar family structures—where peasant families were tied to estates—in other regions of the Carolingian Empire in the ninth century. For instance, we know about Prüm Abbey in the Eifel from the *Prümer Urbar*, a property register that Abbot Regino drew up

in 892–93, and we learn about Bavaria from an 820 *precaria remuneratoria* (remunerative donation) between Abbot Sigifrid von Engelbrechtsmünster and Saint Emmeram's Abbey in Regensburg.[2] It appears that we can generalize from these two cases. It was primarily the parent-child group that lived on the *mansi* and hides of the Carolingian *villicatio*, occasionally with servants or people who may or may not have been their relatives. This kind of grouping indicates a conjugal family structure.[3] From today's point of view, this type of structure does not seem worth emphasizing at first glance because it has become generally accepted in European societies. But there are past and present forms of the family where the primary relationship is not between spouses: the father-son relationship is the dominant element. Patrilineal family structures like this one are not evident in the sources for the manorial system in Carolingian times, at least not north of the Alps. And so we may surmise that the standard kinship system for the composition of family households was also not geared to patrilineage—to the extent that this system played a role in the estate-based peasantry. Clues for a bilateral pattern are found in the names of the *mansus* peasants and their family members that are listed in property registers. If, say, in Irmino's polyptych from Saint-Germain-des-Prés, a certain Gautsaus and a certain Faroildis had two sons called Gaudus and Faregaus, or a Rainordus and an Agenildis had a daughter Ragenildis, then we can clearly see that essential elements from both sides of the family were consciously meant to live on in the children.[4] This was not about a unilineal system of kinship but a bilateral one. Conjugal household organization and bilateral kinship system are correlated. Wherever the spousal connection is central, the genealogical lines of both parents will be more significant for their children.

We might well assume that, in later times, forms of the family that turn up in Carolingian property registers would have spread in tandem with the hide system. Strong evidence for this tie comes from the congruence of the frontier of the medieval colonization of the East with one of the most importance borders between two differing European marriage and family patterns.[5] In 1965, John Hajnal published his trend-setting article "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in which he worked out the far-reaching differences between marriage patterns east and west of a line running from Trieste to St. Petersburg, basing his findings on demographic data from more recent times.[6] No

essential differences regarding age at marriage and marriage frequency showed up in a comparison of the East with the situation outside Europe; but in the West, the age at marriage and the number of singles were higher than average. In spite of factual and terminological criticisms of Hajnal's European marriage pattern,[7] we can say today that his thesis has been acknowledged in essence, even by his early skeptics.[8] Massimo Livi-Bacci has steered us toward special developments west of the "Hajnal Line"—which matches up with the colonization of the East—that have received less attention.[9] Historically, a relatively high frequency of marriage has been recorded in some border areas of the western pattern. This was mainly the case in southern Italy and Sicily (which was Byzantine for a long time during the Middle Ages), then in southern Spain (which was under Moorish control for many centuries), then in Ireland (which has often been referred to because of its unique development), and finally, in parts of Finland (although it lies to the east of St. Petersburg), which was powerfully influenced by eastern structures right up until the nineteenth century.[10] These findings strongly suggest that we look for the origin of the European marriage pattern in medieval times, while noting that the agrarian conditions created in the Frankish Empire were especially important. Medieval sources back up the assumption of an early origin of this type. Thus it was precisely the analysis of the family forms listed in Irmino's polyptich that have led us to suspect that conditions propitious for promoting the European marriage pattern were already present by the early ninth century.[11]

The cross-cultural comparison of the unique marriage pattern in Europe west of the Trieste–St. Petersburg line provides but a first piece of information about the special nature of family development in this area. Age at marriage and marriage frequency can be subject to a certain amount of variability according to time, space, and social stratum. Not all of these fluctuations should be seen as the result of particular processes of structural change in the family. But these family structures and their determining factors, which are persistent in spite of cyclical variations, are of prime concern for the question of a family development specific to Europe. John Hajnal later connected his European marriage pattern with the corresponding rules for household formation; Peter Laslett has worked out organizational trends in traditional European domestic communities on the same basis.[12] This typology was essentially derived from data from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. Only a few scattered quantifying sources have been analyzed that went farther back, which raises the question whether more recent

structural features that are considered to be specifically European can identify lines of continuity from Europe's earliest times.

The correlation of marriage and family patterns by region on the European continent is different for Hajnal and Laslett. Hajnal originally juxtaposed "western" to "eastern," equating the former with "European," but he later restricted this pattern to northwest Europe.[13] He considers Scandinavia to be part of northwest Europe, including Iceland but excluding Finland, the British Isles, the Netherlands, the German-speaking area, and northern France. Laslett, on the one hand, speaks of a "Western family," while on the other, he distinguishes two large areas which he calls "Northern and Western" and "Southern and Eastern" and which he then subdivides into "West" and "West/central or middle" or in "Mediterranean" and East."[14] Two reasons could lie behind this terminological fuzziness. On the conceptual level, the two-track understanding of Europe as a physical geographically fixed continent and as a historically formed social and cultural space presents some difficulties. On the factual level, a problem arises in that, with regard to the patterns concerned, clearly defined borders similar to those in the East are not found the farther into the South we go. In the "West" there are transitional zones and areas of interference in the South that are difficult to categorize precisely, if at all. Both Hajnal and Laslett seem to see the northwest of the continent as the area where the "Western" or "European" pattern is centered. This fits in with the picture of a social dynamic emanating from the heartland of the Frankish Empire from the early Middle Ages on.

In his survey "Characteristics of the Western Family Considered over Time," Peter Laslett grouped specific characteristics of the European family into four areas.[15] His first point is that family membership "in the West" was confined for the most part to parents and children, the so-called nuclear family or the simple family household. Carolingian sources show that with regard to generational depth this form of the household was clearly dominant at the time. The prevalence of the two-generation family over the three-generation one is so apparent that we may suppose that two were desirable and three were in general deliberately avoided. Manorial labor policy within the *villicatio* system included the possibility of just that, especially where *servi casati* were concerned, that is, serfs/*servi* (*Unfreie*) who had settled in their own homes.[16] Individuals, divided families, or even whole ones could

be moved around within the *villicatio*; once the sons and daughters of *mansus* farmers were grown up they could be required to serve in the manor itself or on the farms of other *mansus* farmers. Most important of all, the lord of the manor could influence the time when his subjects could marry. This seems to have been the key to the way *mansi* were settled, and it guaranteed the dominance of the nuclear family. Sons had to marry as soon as they took over their father's farm or any holding that was available. On the other hand, they were not allowed to marry as long as they did not run a farm independently. We know this from a way of handing down the farm (*Hoffolgepraxis*) practiced in later times, for instance, in central Europe.[17] This was an effective way to avoid having three-generation families, which would have been a particular burden on the peasant and would have impaired his ability to fulfill his duties to his lord. This restriction probably would have already been the practice in Carolingian times.

To marry only when the younger generation had become independent necessarily meant marriage at a late age. And now we come to Laslett's second point, which follows Hajnal's European marriage pattern: the relatively late age for mothers, which for Hajnal appeared to be particularly characteristic of Europe. We have but a few early medieval sources that enable us to calculate values for the average age at marriage. We can make a start in this direction with the 813–14 registry of the peasants who belonged to the Church of Saint Victor of Marseilles.[18] It records very high numbers of *baccularii* and *baccularie*, meaning unmarried people over fifteen. These people make up a percentage of the population that is clearly higher than that of children between the ages of two and fifteen, which can lead us to conclude that the marriage age of both sexes was a relatively advanced one. Sources of this kind are of course rare exceptions. We can see much more clearly the predominance of the parent-child group in practically all the regions of the Frankish Empire where the hide system was widespread. And this peasant family structure inclines us to believe that even then the European marriage pattern, organized around the establishing of a household, prevailed.[19]

Laslett's third characteristic of the "Western family" can also only be documented for the Carolingian period indirectly. He calls the minor age difference between spouses a phenomenon specific to Europe, particularly with regard to the comparatively high percentage of women who were older than their husbands. Irmino's polyptych for Saint-Germain-des-Prés mentions only 86 widowers and 133 widows among 8,000 peasant subjects. These are relatively low values, from which we

can deduce that there was fairly strong pressure to remarry soon after entering widowhood. From the lord's point of view, this policy was obviously economically reasonable and rational. The *mansi* farmers could not carry out their prescribed dues and services until the two key positions in the household were filled. It was also in the lord's interest if a widowed peasant woman were to marry an able-bodied young man who could step into the deceased farmer's place. In European peasant societies, the comparatively high percentage of these second marriages where the woman was older might well have resulted mostly from this kind of influence by the lord. It is typical of regions where the hide system shaped agrarian structures.[20]

Laslett's fourth characteristic of the "Western family" is particularly important: the presence of servants who were not kin but were still fully recognized household members. These servants who were not related by bonds of kinship did not serve in one household throughout their lives but only from youth to marriage. This is why Laslett speaks of "life-cycle servants."[21] Life-cycle servants were people in the household who were different from the domestic slaves found in many cultures, and they were sometimes included among members of the family. They formed an element specific to the family structure that enables us to relate it to the hide system. As a matter of fact, these domestics were often found in property registers as early as the Carolingian period.[22] We cannot determine whether or not the servants mentioned in these sources were adolescents because no ages were given, but this was probably the case, since they were all single. The roots of this institution can probably be located in two moves concerning labor within the manorial system.[23] First, lords or their officials most likely took into the manor the younger children of their *mansi* farmers if their parents did not need them for helping take care of their own household—the children might have been young girls who could do some weaving in the *gynecaeum*. Relocations of this kind were most probable, given the close interconnections between manor and *mansi* in carrying out work because of *Robotleistungen* (compulsory work by the peasant on the domain). A second step seems to have been the labor arrangement agreed upon between the different *mansi* of a manor, or the hides, that involved servant labor. This kind of work, too, can be traced back to the ninth century. It probably originated with an initiative on the lord's part. There is no definite proof from the ninth century that children of *mansus* farmers would frequently move to other farms, something that was to become typical of servants in the hide system in Europe. But it does seem thoroughly consistent with the basic principle of the

labor arrangement within the framework of the *villicatio*. The specifically European institution of servant work matches up with the manorial system in so many ways that it is highly probable that they shared a common root.

All four characteristics of the "Western family" that Laslett lists go far back in history. All four indicate the influence of the manorial system. All four can be connected with the hide system. All four point toward different facets of the conjugal family: In the simple family household, the conjugal couple were the nucleus. The uniquely advanced age at marriage was tied to the fact that marriage established the independence of the master or mistress of the house. The significance of remarriage can be explained by the necessity of having to keep the key positions of master and mistress of the house filled. Working as a servant was correlated with marriage at an advanced age. Until you could marry, you were kept in a dependent position that was essentially a child's role—if not at your parents' house then living as a farmhand or maid with a family unrelated to you. These four characteristics of the Western family can be supplemented by still others that similarly involve a strong conjugal family, that also have roots going well back in time, and that also display connections to the hide system.

The institution of the peasant's retirement especially distinguishes the rural family in the history of Europe.[24] It was by no means found in every major region where the manorial system played a formative role. And even where retirement was standard practice, only a minority of the peasant population made use of it. Nevertheless, it seems noteworthy because it exhibits essential elements of the family structure that are of broader significance. Retirement was based on the opportunity to relinquish the position of master of the house because of old age—not an obvious matter of course when compared with other cultures. After turning the farm over, the old farmer and his wife would continue to live there along with their successor, and they were entitled to have him take care of them. The new master—their son, as a rule—could now marry. The family was not reconstituted around father and son but around the new couple. A three-generation family was thereby created where the authority resided in the middle generation, not the oldest one. The obligation of caring for the older couple fell to the farm rather than to people. If the son who took over the farm were to sell it, then the new owner would have to care for the retired couple.

We can observe similar situations in modern times, which indicates that the origins of the peasant's retirement lay in the hide system. When this institution began, it was probably the lord who made the decision as to how and when the hide or *mansus* was to be passed on.[25] The heavy plow made special physical demands, and if the *mansus* farmer was no longer able to meet his plowing duties on the manor, or could not work his land, then he was replaced. As late as the modern age the lord's approval, or that of his officials, was required for regulating retirement. The farther back we go, the more we can expect to find the influence of lordship on issues of succession. In this regard, the *servi casati*, as well as the *coloni*, were certainly unable to regulate these matters on their own authority during the Carolingian period. Giving up the position of authority because of advanced age was a far-reaching intervention. Internal family arrangements by themselves cannot account for the institutionalizing of this break in the life cycle or the family cycle. The hide system, as an organized form of lordship, provides a plausible interpretive context for the institution of retirement.[26]

Above and beyond the regulation of retirement, the lord's right to decide matters of succession on his subject farms appears to have been important for the rural family within the European manorial system. In times and places where manorial influence on transferring the farm was strong, the peasant family structure could suffer from the diverse consequences of different retirement strategies. The peasant's rights of inheritance—which may have had the appearance of passing on the property according to standardized rules—were secondary, compared with the lord's strategic needs.[27] In spite of the great diversity of the lord's succession strategies, we can nevertheless begin with a commonality of certain principle interests.[28] In general, a lord would push for a single heir to the farm; its dues and services had to be maintained, something that would be jeopardized if several heirs were to take over. The resultant division into smaller properties might also have a negative effect on overall productivity. The hide as *terra unius familiae* should be retained if at all possible. Furthermore, it was in the lord's interest that the new farmer on the hide be able to work hard and well. The lord was primarily concerned with criteria of productivity and not of kinship. The most efficient successor might just as well be the eldest or the youngest or another son, or else a son-in-law, or someone outside the family who would then be the widow's new husband.

Given the lord's concerns, there were two consequences for independent peasant families: his interests promoted flexibility by working against strengthening certain rights of succession among kin, and

they favored singular succession, that is, there was to be but a single heir. Here we can speak of "unigeniture," as long as it was the farmer's child who was taking over the farm. Unigeniture was only one variant among the many kinds of inheritance rights based on the lord's strategies for passing on the farm. And, in more modern times, it is more likely to show up in those areas on the margins of Europe that had adopted the manorial system earlier. It does not appear to have been preserved in the Carolingian heartland.[29] But unigeniture was probably originally found wherever the hide system had spread; it was most certainly a special characteristic of any part of Europe where the manorial system was established. The multiplicity of its later forms obscures the common features of its origins. As the influence of the manorial system declined, forms of the peasant's rights of inheritance arose that allowed for dividing the property and for singular succession—the latter permitted the transfer *inter vivos* (during the farmer's lifetime) or after his death, via primogeniture or ultimogeniture, and so on. Not only the male line played a role in all these modes of succession, but so did the female: the transfer of a farm to women marked a critical difference when compared to its opposite arrangement, the right of equal inheritance by all the males in the family that was found throughout eastern Europe.[30] These fundamental types of handing down ownership, along with the family forms related to them, were not restricted to the peasant's world: they characterized all of society. Only princely and noble houses occupied a special position in this regard.

The most important feature of the Western family is doubtless the fact that it was not constituted by bloodlines but was a house or household community largely free of kinship ties. English-language family research uses the very apposite concept of the "coresident domestic group" that is based on family contexts in more modern times but also fits medieval ones perfectly.[31] Living in a family that includes non-kin goes back a long way in European history. The hide system was probably key to this type of family life, but this will not have been the only source. Criteria for organizing labor were the leading factors in the composition of a household that farmed a hide. The life-cycle servant was the prototype of the non-kin coresident who would be taken into the family to augment the work force temporarily. We already find him listed in the polyptychs of Carolingian monastic estates in the early days of the manorial system. Other kinds of unrelated coresidents were added wherever the manorial system continued to develop in Europe: inmates, lodgers, guests, foster children, and elderly retirees and children left behind by previous owners who shared no bond of kinship.[32]

It was not only the need to supplement the labor force that was given priority when these people were taken in or allowed to stay permanently; other concerns were protecting and providing for all members in the household community. Compared to the farm's economic function within the hide system, these were secondary developments made possible by weakening the lineage principle. The hide as *terra unius familiae* was first of all a family operation, and the peasant couple was at the heart of the family enterprise's organization. All other forms of family enterprises in medieval Europe were modeled along these lines. The house or household was the prevailing structure that provided for interaction and a sense of belonging together. This is palpably mirrored in family names originating during and after the High Middle Ages. Wherever the manorial system existed on the continent, it was not the names based on descent that counted most, as in eastern Europe, but those derived from dwelling places.[33] The frequency of names like Maier, Huber, Hofer, Hofmann, or Lechner in German-speaking areas indicates to what extent this "domocentric" family—centered on the household—had grown out of the manorial and hide systems.

The domocentric family in those parts of Europe where the manorial system was in place very likely also influenced the kinship system. The focus on the married couple, the modest number of generations, the frequency of widows' remarriage, the taking of servants and other non-kin into the family group, and especially the handing down of the farm according to economic logic—all these must have worked against unilinear kinship patterns. As a rule, manorial and lineage structures are in conflict with each other, but this opposition alone cannot satisfactorily explain the profound changes in European kinship systems. These processes of change go back to well before the rise of the Frankish agrarian system; in spatial terms, they extend beyond that system's area of dissemination. So we must look for other determining factors that might allow us to understand why Frankish systems of agrarianism, lordship, and family could evolve in which lineage principles play so minor a part.

Fundamental trends in the changing kinship systems in Europe can best be deduced from the modified kinship terms in various European languages.[34] Initially, terminological analyses will only yield very general clues that other indicators can differentiate and refine. Above all, these analyses cannot allow us to conclude anything about how some

of the concepts used mirror a certain contemporaneous social order. Kinship terminology often outlasted by hundreds of years the conditions that gave rise to it. We frequently come upon phenomena of cultural lag when tapping this linguistic source in the attempt to learn about historical kinship systems, but that a change in a social situation must have preceded a change in vocabulary lies beyond the shadow of a doubt. Three major transformational processes illustrate this statement with regard to European kinship systems.

We can describe the first fundamental trend in the shifting of European kinship terms as the gradual appearance of the same, or parallel, terms for paternal and maternal relatives, which is best shown in the expressions for a parent's siblings. All the Indo-European languages of Europe originally distinguished between the father's brother or sister and the mother's brother or sister. Take Latin as an example: the father's siblings were called *patruus* and *amita*, and on the mother's side, *avunculus* and *matertera*. In Middle High German the terms were *Vetter* and *Base*, *Oheim* and *Muhme*. As the history of almost every European language evolved, distinctions between paternal and maternal relatives became neutral. And so French used *oncle* for both parents' brother (derived from the Latin word for a maternal uncle, *avunculus*) and *tante* for either parent's sister (following from the Latin word *amita*, a paternal sister). These bilaterally applied terms spilled over into other languages, for instance, English and German. Similar parallel nomenclatures developed that were based on kinship terms in one's own language, in Polish, for example. Greek was the first European language to eliminate the terminological distinction between the father's and the mother's side, a transition that began as early as between the fifth and third century BC.[35] Vulgar Latin in late antiquity was next. All the Romance languages derived from Vulgar Latin have the same terms for both sides of the family: Italian, Sardic, Rhaeto-Romance, Provençal, French, Catalan, Spanish, Portuguese, Sephardic Spanish, Aromunian, and Rumanian. This process was therefore complete by the early Middle Ages throughout the territory of the old Roman Empire.[36] The first Germanic language to undergo this change was English, beginning with the Norman Conquest.[37] Basically the same change occurred in German in early modern times.[38] There were two different developments in the Scandinavian languages. One tended to completely equate the father's and mother's siblings by using the same terms; the other did too, but formed compound words to differentiate the sides of the family. This was the case, for example, with *farbror* and *morbror* in Swedish, and with analogous forms in Icelandic and Scottish English.[39]

These descriptive compounds were fundamentally different from the completely independent terms for each parent's siblings in the early phases of Indo-European languages. It was not a matter of eliminating the opposition between the paternal and the maternal sides but of essentially equating them, as is apparent from the structure of the terms themselves. And in the majority of the Slavic languages, too, the process of parallelizing outlined above took place, first in Czech and Polish, relatively late in Russian.[40] The Slavic languages in the Balkans, on the other hand, have retained a differentiating terminology for kinship to this day: Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Bosnian still have concepts distinguishing between a paternal and a maternal brother.[41] The same holds for Albanian, where even parents' sisters are differentiated. In this region the great process of transforming European kinship terminology, which emanated from southeastern Europe 2,500 years ago, has not yet reached its end.

A second fundamental trend in the transformation of European kinship terminology is the use of identical terms for blood relatives and in-laws. This paralleling process was also at work in Vulgar Latin during late antiquity. The term *cognati* at first referred to blood relatives who were not under the authority of the *pater familias*. Sometime around the fourth century, this concept underwent a substantial expansion: it came to include "affined" relationships (the Latin *affinis* refers to persons related by marriage). The word *affinis* therefore fell into disuse in late antiquity and was replaced by *cognati*. In-laws now became, through marriage, like blood relatives.[42] This sense of *cognati* survives in kinship terms in the Romance languages. The trend of using the same terms is even more pronounced in another terminological complex. French, Dutch, English, and German have a suite of concepts for relatives by marriage that is formed from compounds made from the designations for nuclear family members.[43] *Beau-père* corresponds to *schoonvader*," "father-in-law" to *Schwiegervater, belle-mère* to "mother-in-law." The same goes for *beau-frère, belle-soeur, beau-fils,* and *belle-fille*. All these related people had no names in Latin or Old High German that were in any way similar to the names for their closest blood relatives. Originally, the terms in all Indo-European languages for relatives by marriage were unmistakably different from those for blood relatives. This assimilation process poses the question whether there was a reevaluation of marriage at some time in medieval history and whether the terms for kinship produced in so doing were revalued along with it.

The third basic trend in the transformation of the European kinship terminology is unique by its very nature and therefore especially instructive for understanding the whole process of change: the increasing number of parallels in the nomenclature of blood relatives and so-called spiritual relatives.[44] A spiritual kinship was originally established by sponsorship at baptism. Then, in the wake of this model, other relationships came into existence that were created around other sacraments—relationships that eventually were regarded as kinship. In general, ties that were instituted on a religious basis were conceived of as kinship ties. Traditionally, spiritual kinship has no place in the kinship typologies found in ethnology. This seems readily understandable because the typologies were, after all, drawn primarily from the analysis of non-European kinship situations. But spiritual kinship is a specifically Christian and European phenomenon that was essentially propagated outside of Europe by Christian missionaries. Inside Europe, it is found during the Middle Ages only in societies converted to Christianity. The new kinship terminology created by baptismal sponsorship corresponded to the system of relationships created by marriage: parallel terms for kinship by blood were formed, with *patrinus* and *matrina*, the godparents, juxtaposed to *pater* and *mater*, the biological parents. The terminology in most Romance languages followed the Latin. The English terms are also very expressive—godfather, godmother, and godparents—which have their counterparts in German. In Latin, godchildren were called *filiolus* and *filiola*, in parallel with the terms for biological children, but the relationship between godchildren and biological children had no descriptive term that would indicate a sibling relationship. On the other hand, the words for male and female godparents from the biological parents' point of view seem to have been all the more important. In Latin they are *compater* and *commater*, that is, cofather and comother, and their relationship to each other was *compaternitas*. We first meet a rudimentary application of blood kinship terms to godparenthood terms in the fourth century.[45] Not until about the end of the sixth century was there any documentation for *compater* and *commater* in the Western Church, from where they spread eastward.[46] Spiritual kinship through sponsorship at confirmation or witnessing a marriage played a minor role by comparison, but even in these cases we can discover concepts analogous to blood kinship. It was apparently significant that the priest officiating at the baptism and the godfather could both be considered as a *pater spiritualis*. The idea of a paternal role for the priest was not of course restricted to child baptism.

It belonged to the more general concept of spiritual kinship Christians had among themselves—one that was expressed above and beyond the physical relationship mainly by expanding the terms "brother" and "sister."

The decisive factor in this great transformation of kinship terminology in Europe was the influence of Christianity. This is more obvious in the parallel terms for blood and spiritual kinship than it is in the two basic trends discussed earlier. From an analytical perspective, we can distinguish three levels of influence: first, direct and intentional influence on kinship systems via canon law; second, indirect structural changes to fundamental elements of Christianity; and finally, the ramifications of traditions from classical antiquity that cannot be considered specifically Christian but that Christianity passed on to medieval societies.

The first type of influence incorporates first and foremost the church bans on marriage between relatives. These began in the fourth century and reached their zenith in the eleventh. The influence of these canonical norms is perfectly evident in the English terms for relatives through marriage such as "father-in-law," "daughter-in-law," and so forth. What is meant in these terms by the word "law" is canon law. Even though a "law" is not mentioned by name in similar, parallel terms, canon law is the motivating force behind them.[47] The basic principles guiding the changes in terminology, or the assimilation of terms, were exactly the same as those in Christian churches that prohibited marriage between relatives. The development of unions categorized as incestuous was a highly complicated affair in the various Christian churches and was in no way uniform at all times and in all places. But these unions share some basic tendencies: the equating of the paternal and the maternal lines, of blood kin and kin by marriage, and the inclusion of spiritual kin in the family. It was easily recognized from the relevant bans on marriage who was seen in the early Middle Ages as being related to whom from a Christian standpoint, and the bans were added to, step by step, right up into the High Middle Ages. We find it difficult to comprehend today just how preoccupied the era was with the fear of incest—and not only in the various Christian churches but in Jewish circles as well. Any explanation that it came "from upstairs"—for example, from the Church of Rome and its desire for possessions—can be dismissed a priori.[48] A foremost Christian source that fueled the ban on marriage between relatives was the principle of *una caro*, which, in

the biblical formulation, held that married partners are "as one flesh."[49] It logically follows from this principle that the equating of relatives on both sides was as necessary in the parents' generation as it was in the next. The bilateral kinship system and the conjugal family were both based on this fundamental idea. A second basic Christian thought that significantly influenced the concept of kinship was the primacy of "being born of the spirit" over "being born of the flesh."[50] Seen against this background, the marriage bans applicable to "spiritual kin" are easier to comprehend. To put it in general terms: the value of baptism in Christianity appears to have been a deciding factor in the devaluing of lineage ties and in the upward reevaluation of spiritual relationships.

With the sacrament of baptism and its consequences for conditions of kinship, we come to the second level of interconnected effects: the structural elements of Christianity that indirectly influenced kinship structures and their relevant terminology.[51] A Christian joins a congregation through baptism; Christianity is a distinctly congregation-based religion. The most important religious acts are carried out within a congregation, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, but also the most important rites of passage, such as baptism, marriage, and burial, which do not take place within a descent group or household. Consequently, Christianity does not attach any religious significance to family and kinship groups.

Christianity is a religion of salvation. The relationship of all the great salvific religions to the family range from ambivalent to critical.[52] One aspect of this stance is individual justification. Salvation is a matter of an individual's act, not of the "merits of the fathers." And the individual cannot be charged with the "sins of the fathers." Lineage is insignificant as far as the salvation of souls is concerned.

Christianity is a missionary religion. It turns to all people without any restrictions as to their birth. It differs in this from tribal or ethnic religions, which by their very nature cannot venture beyond their real or fictitious lineage communities; Christianity works against thinking in categories of descent.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion; it is oriented toward a single god. Even when, in Christian history, the veneration of saints often jeopardized the monotheistic character of the religious community in practice, it never went as far as ancestor worship, which is why there are no Christian groups or actions based on lineage.

Christianity is a religious community organized on the basis of a hierarchical bureaucracy. Church offices are not inherited but passed on by consecration. The thought that charisma can be inherited is foreign

to Christianity in principle—another fact reducing the importance of lineage.

Christianity is, finally, a thoroughly ascetic religion. The idea of a special holiness accrues to the monk and the priest who lives like a monk. The monk leaves his family and kin behind and renounces sexuality. All these factors running counter to thinking in lineage categories were part of Christianity from its earliest beginnings. Many of them can be attested by the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels.[53] These traditions led to a confrontation with clan and tribal societies in the course of Christianizing Europe from the early Middle Ages on, which in turn led to a radical transformation of kinship systems and terminology in those societies.

That the great transformational process of European kinship terminology must also have had pre-Christian roots is clear from a sequence of events over a long period of time. The rudimentary beginnings are found in the Greek language from the fifth to the third century BC, and it is very likely that broader conditions further influenced these processes. Traditional ancient Greek kinship terminology was probably transmitted just the way ancient Greek traditions were, by and large within a Christian context. The term "brother" can serve as a concrete example. The expansion of the concept of "brother" beyond blood kinship in several Romance languages led to the emergence of a new term for the biological brother.[54] This can surely be traced back to a Christian influence, but the phenomenon itself is not genuinely Christian.[55] In various Eastern religious communities, strangers became "brothers" by means of initiation ceremonies. The teachings of the Stoics spread the term even further. The use of "brother" in urban contexts for a brother in office or a fraternity brother goes back a long way. Hellenistic urban culture may be regarded as the social foil for this phenomenon, which, thanks to Christianity, continued to live and have an effect on medieval European societies. Similar causative connections must be considered from many angles to understand the changes to European kinship systems and their terminology.

The growth of European kinship terminology is a key indicator of fundamental transformations in the kinship systems of Europe. We can rarely decide precisely when these changes took place. Other ways of expressing kinship can yield more in this regard: naming a newborn child to give it its place in the family and among kin, forms of mar-

riage, handing down property and the position of authority, burial customs, blood revenge and the surrogate of paying restitution, and so on.[56] There were, in all these areas, both a standardized order of things and concrete, individual cases that offer a preliminary basis for interpretation. These forms enable us to classify kinship phenomena according to time and space, to make class-specific differentiations, and to elucidate divergent and unique developments. The overall picture can be corroborated by investigating other kinship patterns: making paternal and maternal lines equal—and equating relatives by blood and marriage—as well as expanding our understanding of kinship as a whole. To put it differently, there was movement in a direction toward bilateral kinship and the conjugal family, both linked to looser lineage ties.

The assumption that Christianity was definitive in this development meets with a rather basic difficulty: the peoples of southeastern Europe, in whose languages the ancient pattern of Indo-European kinship terminology has been preserved to this day, have been Christian for more than a millennium. The situation was similar in Russia, where the transformational process came into play very late, although the new kinship terminology had already won out. Both in Russia and the Balkans, some aspects of strongly patrilineal kinship and family systems were evident quite apart from the archaic kinship terminology. In passing on a property, the common property shared by agnates or by equally inheriting male members of the family was dominant. The fundamental family structure was patrilineal, whether it was a complex, extended family or a simple one. In the western Balkans, we can find even today patrilineal descent groups or tribal groups subdivided into descent groups.[57] These relationships are far removed from bilateral kinship, the conjugal family, and less binding ties of descent.

The tension created by the family and kinship situation in the mountain regions of the western Balkans—but also in eastern and southeastern Europe as a whole—alerts us to the fact that monocausal explanatory models are inadequate. The situation can only be explained by the mutual interplay of economic, cultural, and religious factors, along with those of lordship. The circumstances on either side of the Hajnal Line provide a fine example.

A plausible argument can be made that it was the hide system that ultimately shaped family and kinship structures to the west of this line. The pattern of handing down the farm, the age at marriage, the use of servants, and other features mentioned earlier all point in this direction. On the one hand, the hide system presupposed an agrarian

situation; it is not found where there is no cerealization—witness the situation in Friesland and Ireland. On the other hand, the hide system was located within a particular sociocultural framework: it could not have existed in a society with strict patrilineal family and kinship ties, for it required a complicated balance in the division of labor: between the manor estate and independent peasant farms, and between and within the individual hides throughout the family life cycle. If a lord's steward in the ninth century had to be careful about maintaining the basic patrilineal structure in every one of these domestic communities, then the manorial system would probably have soon broken down. Now there were most certainly other conditions obtaining at the time in the Frankish heartland, the cradle of this system. The *servi casati* were born into a complete lack of freedom, so that for them there was no kinship system to take into account. But no indications of patrilineal structures appear in the peasant population either, regardless of whether a peasant had free or half-free parents. It is difficult to ascertain which factor was preeminent here. Within the Roman Empire, the Frankish heartland stood under the centuries-long influence of a Mediterranean urban culture that on the whole resisted thinking in terms of lineage—an influence that involved Christianity as well, which had a special effect on this way of thinking. We can say that Christian social structures, to this extent at least, were a prerequisite for the creation of manorial organization within the Frankish Empire and for the family and kinship structures it influenced.

But what we can safely say about the origins of the hide system does not apply, even implicitly, to the diffusion of that system. During the course of its expansion it collided with societies in quite different agrarian and sociocultural situations. Ecological conditions might well have blocked the system's progress in Friesland and the North Sea coastal marshes. It is striking that those are precisely the areas where we find features—such as the clan system and most notably blood revenge—that typify societies strongly oriented toward lineage.[58] Blood revenge is rooted in a concept of kinship in which all men of a group are treated almost like a single person. The agnates together are considered to be the bearers of honor—and guilt. That is why the guilt of one relative can be avenged on someone else who had utterly no part in the deed. The idea of blood revenge is completely incompatible with Christian views of guilt and innocence. Nevertheless, the institution of blood revenge was still alive in several European societies even after they were Christianized, those in the North Sea marshes among them. Was Christianity so superficial in those areas that it did not adversely affect these

traditional regional practices? Did Christianity perhaps somehow come to terms with them in spite of the apparently unbridgeable antagonism between them? Or was it the hard ecological and economic facts that prevented the transformation into a manorial system, thereby stabilizing the clan system and the code of blood revenge? These two, differing explanatory models were not, admittedly, mutually exclusive in any way, nor were they elsewhere in Europe.

During the colonization of the East, family and kinship patterns in the hide system were transferred to regions that very probably would have been organized differently before then. This can be assumed at least for the Slavic and Baltic tribes east of the Elbe that were incorporated into the western system during the High Middle Ages. There are many clues indicating that patrilineal structures probably used to exist in these societies. These include patrilineal, complex family forms and evidence of unpartitioned male inheritance, but also settlement patterns and burial practices.[59] Whereas changes in the makeup of the household, in the practice of inheritance rights, or in the organization of dwellings point to the influence of the new agrarian system, the shift away from common graveyards belonging to descent groups and toward community cemeteries implies Christian influence. The introduction of Christianity always preceded the introduction of the hide system throughout the entire area of colonization in the East—often by only a slight difference in time, but occasionally centuries earlier. The time sequence was never reversed, anywhere. The western agrarian system at all times found a state of affairs where Christian conversion had either relaxed or weakened older patrilineal patterns. This process had already paved the way for the transition to a bilateral system of kinship and the conjugal family.

This loosening or weakening effect vis-à-vis patrilineal lineage principles may be assumed in general for areas of Christianization to the east of the Hajnal Line as well—whether from the Western or the Eastern Church did not matter, because the Great Schism changed little on this point after 1054. To give examples from the three levels of causation discussed above: There was an attempt in eastern and southeastern Europe to implement church regulations for marriage, with their extensive bans on exogamy.[60] Then, too, the principle of the congregation dictated religious life even there. Finally, the idea of fraternity taken over from Hellenistic urban culture was still alive and well, thanks to the mediation of Christianity. There was nevertheless strong opposition in eastern and southeastern Europe that led to very long-lasting patrilineal descent patterns—varying in intensity in different regions

but standing on the whole in marked contrast to the situation west of the Hajnal Line.

Turning to economic factors, we will begin by singling out two, which can be accurately called the "forest" ecotype and the "mountain" ecotype.[61] As we have seen in an earlier chapter, slash-and-burn economy had played a very important part in the history of northern Europe. It may well have been preeminent in more ancient times in many areas where the three-field system became dominant after its introduction as the East was colonized. The slash-and-burn economy's significance for family and kinship organization lay, on the one hand, in the necessity of having a gender-specific division of labor and, on the other hand, in the need for several adult males to cooperate. These needs were already taken into account by equal male inheritance rights and complex patrilineal family forms. Structural principles of this type were able to persist for a long time, even when their related economic form had long been abandoned.

The same is true of the second ecotype, which appears to have been typical primarily of the western Balkan region. A pastoral economy based on sheep and goat raising had defined people's lives there for thousands of years. And a rigid, gender-specific division of labor was a necessity for the region's pastoral economy, as was cooperation among several adult males. Accordingly, one could find complex patrilineal family forms, but beyond that there were patrilineally structured groups that, together, formed tribal communities.[62] The survival of these tribal relationships to the present day appears to be unique among European societies, as is the survival of vendettas within those very same structures.[63] Here is the extreme polar opposite of the developmental trends that led to the characteristic syndrome of bilateral kinship, the conjugal family, and less binding descent ties elsewhere in Europe.

Even though this diametric pattern represents but a thinly settled area in an out-of-the-way, mountainous region, the contrast makes it obvious which of the family and kinship patterns was possible for Christian Europe. And this opposition allows us to reach some conclusions about

causative factors and their origin. It was not only patrilineally structured family groups raising sheep by means of a strict gender-specific division of labor that defined the pattern; nor was it only property rights based on equal male inheritance; nor only descent groups attending to governance and military tasks; nor only villages divided into districts by lineage groups, so-called *mahalla*s—a division reflected even in the location of the graves in the cemetery—all of these together were part and parcel of the characteristic syndrome of family and blood relationships that were so powerfully centered on lineage.[64] A specific form of ancestor worship in Christian guise was part of the same syndrome.[65] The form is of particular importance because it qualifies the thesis that Christianity is incompatible with ancestor worship, because it shows that pre-Christian religious ideas continued to be significant for family and kinship structures, and most of all because it is crucial for a comparison between Christian and non-Christian religions in regard to the family.

The most concrete expression of pre-Christian ancestor worship is the feast of the patron saint of the household in the western Balkans. It is regarded as one of the most solemn feast days—if not *the* most solemn—in the Christian year. Unlike Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, it is not celebrated in the parish but in the home or together with relatives. The feast day varies from home to home, and celebrating the patron saint of the household is passed on from generation to generation. The tie with a lineage nexus is unmistakable. Indeed, persons venerating the same household saints are often forbidden to marry lest they be related through the patriline. It is important to have sons, because otherwise the Slava candle, which is lit on the patron saint's feast day, will go out. It is clear from the liturgy for the feast day that not only the saint is celebrated but also the patrilineal ancestors. The *čitula* (the list of forefathers that is read aloud) plays an important part here. The ancestor worship is strictly patrilineal and goes much further than the Christian commemoration of the dead. This can be seen in the sacrifices connected with the patron saint's feast day. There are many regions where even the blood sacrifice of animals is found. Sacrificing to one's ancestors means that they are expected to do something in return. Here we can still see the residual effect of the idea—typical of ancestor worship—that propitiating one's ancestors will induce them to provide aid and protection in the lives of their descendants. When and how ancestor worship came to be connected with festivals of Christian saints cannot be unequivocally reconstructed, but we can take it for

granted that this religious component played a decisive part in the continuity of patrilineal descent forms in the western Balkans.

The social and cultural contexts of the western Balkan feast of the household saint broaches the question of broader connections: are there other eastern and southeastern regions in Europe showing links between patrilineal family structures, on the one hand, and practices of ancestor worship going back to pre-Christian times on the other? Ancestor worship is attested relatively well, through written documents and corroborating archeological finds, for the period before the eastern Slavs were converted to Christianity.[66] Vestiges of this practice have been found in folk customs up until rather recent times. The cult of the Russian *domovoi* (household spirit) displays many parallels with the feast of the household saint in southeastern Europe.[67] It is tied to lineage, not to place. It does more than simply commemorate ancestors: it sacrifices to them—and reciprocal actions are expected from them. The sacrifice is performed by the father of the house or the eldest man in the family. The Russian Orthodox Church fought hard and long against this domestic form of ancestor worship, as is shown in written documents stretching back into the early Middle Ages. Nevertheless, elements of ancestor worship were partly assimilated into church liturgy, for instance, through the celebration of "Ancestors' Days," or "Parents' Days," or "Ancestors' Saturdays."[68] The Eastern Church was more tolerant than the Roman Church regarding the syncretism of pre-Christian traditions. Orthodox Finns have likewise carried over remnants of pre-Christian ancestor worship into the present day.[69] It has been shown recently that the widespread cult of the house snake among Baltic peoples harks back to certain ideas from ancestor worship.[70] Elements of ancestor worship were common throughout areas of eastern and southeastern Europe up to more modern times. This appears to have been a significant determinant in the way patrilineal families and kinship were first organized, as well as in their tenacious survival.

A single factor cannot by itself account for the historical relationships of family and other kinfolk to the east of the Hajnal Line any more than it can to the west of it. There is also great variation within each of these two large areas. Socioeconomic and sociocultural determinants must be taken into consideration on both sides. In the example of the western agrarian pattern, it was the hide system in particular that en-

couraged trends toward the conjugal family, bilateral kinship, and the loosening of genealogical ties. But these developments clearly would not have been possible if Christianity had not been moving in the same direction for centuries. If we proceed from a multifactorial explanatory model for the East, then we can immediately discern that there was in its vast region no unifying colonization that might possibly have produced structural analogies with western kinship and family systems. Quite different forms of a subsistence economy seemed to have led to the region's characteristic social forms. To the slash-and-burn economy in the forests of the Northeast and sheep raising in the mountains of the western Balkans, we could certainly add several more types of subsistence economies. It might well be that a feature common to them all was the fact that they had existed for a long time within a tribal organization. The degree of urbanization in the East was relatively small, as were other socioeconomic advances that might have been capable of disrupting tribal structures.

Although as a socio*cultural* factor the adoption of Christianity did have this effect, the patrilineal organization of family and other kin was preserved, even in religious matters and in spite of the conversion of much of the East. This cannot be accounted for by differences of dogma between the Eastern and the Western Churches. The Eastern Church's greater degree of tolerance toward the pre-Christian traditions that did survive—a tolerance that led to a degree of syncretism—has already been mentioned. Another perspective might explain this East-West difference by pointing to the greater penetrating and integrative power of the Western Church in asserting its creed and ritual practices. However that may be, many pre-Christian forms of ancestor worship—especially in the domestic practice of worship—did live on in the East for a very long time after the tide of Christian conversion. This phenomenon cannot be interpreted as a dichotomous, side-by-side existence of two different religious forms; for those who practiced them, they belonged together. Elements of ancestor worship were fully integrated into religious practice in many regions of eastern and southeastern Europe. The tenacity of these patterns leads us to conclude that they played an essential part as a pre-Christian substratum. This was most assuredly not the case in the West. The verifiable forms of ancestor worship in the Greek tradition, which were even more powerful in the Roman one, had long disappeared by the time Mediterranean Christianity opened up the northwestern part of the continent. That ancestor worship can lead to patrilinearity has been observed every-

where, but these kinds of connections are difficult to track in the history of Europe. A comparison with non-European cultures will make the functional connections clear.