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ENGLISH AND AMERICAN HISTORIANS ON FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD IN EARLY MODERN TIMES

Historical demography, including research on the family in old times, has been one of the fastest developing fields of historiography in the last few decades. The beginning of its growth may be dated at 1956, when Gustav Fleury and Louis Henry brought out their handbook of historical demography¹. The research method worked out by Henry, called family reconstitution, made a world career in the next thirty years, becoming a basic technique in historical demography. Henry, a specialist in current demography, was interested less in throwing light on the history of France's population than in finding data in historical materials that would have made it possible to solve the theoretical problems confronting demographers, in particular the question of natural fertility². This is why he did not concentrate attention on general estimates of the size of the population but on observation of reproductive behaviour in individual families, which could lead to broader conclusions based on a statistical analysis of thousands of individual cases. The broadening of the research questionnaire by the social aspects of population behaviour has in the last twenty years turned historical demography into a driv-

¹ G. Fleury, L. Henry, *Des registres paroissiaux a l'histoire de la population: manuel de depouillement et de l'exploitation de l'état civil ancien*, Paris 1956.

² Natural fertility is a demographic regime in which the number of children a couple has does not decrease the probability of another child being born. The definition stressing non-use of contraceptives is too general, for means of that kind have always been used, for instance by putting off marriage, a measure widely applied by populations in old times. L. Henry, *Some Data on Natural Fertility*, "Eugenics Quarterly" 1961, vol. 18; Ch. Wilson, J. Oeppen, M. Pardo, *What is Natural Fertility? The Modelling of a Concept*, "Population Index" 1981, vol. 54.

ing force of historiography in its search for new research possibilities³.

British historical demography, which had for years participated in an animated discussion on the mechanism of industrial revolution and the accompanying population changes, followed a slightly different course than French historical demography. In 1981 the research conducted by E. Anthony Wrigley and Roger Schofield with the co-operation of dozens, if not hundreds, of local amateur historians resulted in the publication of the first volume of *The Population History of England 1541-1871*⁴, which contained systematic estimates of the size of the population, its structure according to age, birth rate, death rate and reproduction coefficients. The work was based on an aggregate analysis of registers from 404 parishes and on regression analysis. The results achieved in this way were verified by a reconstitution of families, which confirmed the earlier observations⁵.

The most important result of the work written by Wrigley and Schofield was that it established the way in which the population of England developed, calling into question the old explanation that the rapid growth of population in the 18th century had been due to the drop in the death rate, a result of higher living standards and the progress of hygiene⁶. According to Wrigley, the drop observed in the death rate in the "long" 18th century (from 1680 to 1821) had a two-and-a-half times smaller impact on the increase in population than the rise in fertility, which in turn was due to the increase in the number of contracted marriages and the lower age of the newly-married persons.

As in the classic Malthusian model, the increase in population led to a rise in food prices and to a drop in per-capita

³ L. Stone, *The Past and the Present Revisited*, London 1987, pp. 24ff.

⁴ E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871. A Reconstruction*, London 1981.

⁵ E. A. Wrigley, R. S. Davis, J. E. Oeppen, R. S. Schofield, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580-1837*, Cambridge 1997.

⁶ See also E. A. Wrigley, *The Growth of Population in Eighteenth-Century England: a Conundrum Resolved*, in: idem, *People, Cities and Wealth*, Oxford 1987; R. S. Schofield, *Family Structure, Demographic Behavior and Economic Growth*, in: *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*, ed. J. Walter, R. S. Schofield, London 1989. For the rise in living standards as a factor leading to a drop in the death rate and to the growth of population see: T. McKeown, R. G. Brown, *Medical Evidence Related to English Population Changes in the Eighteenth Century*, in: *Population in History*, ed. D. V. Glass, D. E. C. Eversley, London 1965.

incomes. The number of contracted marriages (first marriages) and, consequently, also the fertility rate, evolved in the same direction as the per-capita income. Since the English economy was strongly linked to money, this mechanism is clearly apparent if one compares the evolution in living costs with the rise in the number of new marriages, the latter reacting to changes in wages at thirty-year intervals. In periods when the per-capita income was low, marriages were contracted at an older age and the percentage of unmarried persons grew. Non-demographic factors, such as customs regulating the establishment of new households, urbanisation (leading to an increase in the death rate), easy access to additional incomes (favouring early marriages) were also taken into account. The death rate is an exogenous factor influencing the size of a population, and this in turn leads to fluctuations in per-capita incomes.

It is an open question whether the English model can be transferred, and to what extent, to the continent, to say nothing of the Polish territories, where the circulation of money was incomparably smaller and where the 19th century drop in the death rate led to overpopulation in agrarian areas.

As has been said above, Henry's method opened up new prospects to historians. Reflections on the size of population in individual countries were replaced by monographs on individual parishes and only in exceptional cases of whole provinces. This made it possible to take a look at demographic mechanisms from the perspective of families and, thanks to statistical analyses, to discover behaviours, frequently not fully conscious, ignored in traditional sources.

On the margin of purely demographic research there have developed studies on the history of the family, which quickly became one of the most dynamic lines in historical research. They cannot be conducted if one does not know the results of analyses made by historical demographers, which does not mean that they are a field reserved for them. The English historian Michael Anderson who more than twenty years ago tried to sum up the results of studies on the history of the West European family, distinguished four ways of approaching the problem: psychoanalytic, demographic, economic and sentimental⁷. One could add

⁷ M. Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914*, London 1984.

legal approach but it frequently coincides with the other approaches.

Like any other division, this one too is rather artificial; the explanations offered by researchers belonging to different pigeon-holes complement each other and the opinions proclaimed by one school are willingly adopted by others. This applies in particular to the demographic and the economic approach.

In Anderson's opinion the psychoanalytic approach is too arbitrary and cannot therefore be subjected to objective criticism⁸. Generally speaking, this view seems to be right, though valuable works have also been written in this category⁹.

As typical of the sentimental approach Anderson mentions a French historian Philip Ariès's book on childhood and the polemical studies it evoked: Lawrence Stone's book on marriage, love and sex in England; Edward Shorter's study on the formation of modern family; and the works by Frenchman Jean Louis Flandrin¹⁰. This current also includes Alan Macfarlane's study on marriage and love in England, a polemic against the views of L. Stone¹¹.

All these authors share the view that the continuity and changes in the structures of households investigated by demographers do not reflect the real process, for what is of key importance is not "the family as a reality but the family as an idea"¹². The main research task is still to find the roots of the modern family, characterised on the one hand by emotional ties between the parents and their children, and on the other, by

⁸ Ibidem, p. 13.

⁹ E.g. E. H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York 1963; D. Hunt, *Parents and Children in History. The Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France*, New York 1970; L. de Mause, *The History of Childhood*, New York 1974; see also: K. Keniston, *Psychological Development and Historical Change*, in: *Family in History. Interdisciplinary Essays?*, ed. T. Rabb, R. I. Rotberg, New York 1973.

¹⁰ P. Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien regime*, Paris 1960; L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, New York 1977; E. Shorter, *The Making of Modern Family*, New York 1976; J. L. Flandrin, *Les amours paysannes, XVI^e-XIX^e siècles*, Paris 1975; idem, *Families in Former Times: Kinship Household and Sexuality*, Cambridge 1979; and also R. Trumbach, *The Rise of Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth Century England*, New York 1978.

¹¹ A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England. Modes of Reproduction 1300-1840*, Oxford 1986.

¹² Ariès' words quoted after M. Anderson, *Approaches*, p. 39.

separation from a broader circle of kin¹³. Philip Ariès and Edward Shorter, though they disagree about chronology, regard the modernisation of the family as a gradual evolution, from an open family submitted to the control of other members of the clan and of the environment, to the modern nuclear family composed of the parents and their children. According to Stone, this process was a rough path, interspersed with periods of regress. One of these periods was the Puritan 17th century, when local communities increased their control over the internal relations in families, another the Victorian period, with the characteristic patriarchal family model and the strong position of the father who brought up his children very strictly¹⁴.

The chief weakness of the method applied in these researches is their restricted range of vision for it covers mainly the upper social strata which have left the largest amount of sources of a narrative character. Macfarlane ruthlessly depicts this weakness; pointing out that nuclear families and individualisation existed in England in the Middle Ages and that the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries did not mark a turning point in this respect¹⁵. He stresses that emotional ties between spouses and between parents and children also have an earlier genesis. Even at the beginning of the early modern era parents in England did not treat their offspring merely as a potential workforce or as security for old age; they loved their children¹⁶. The Cambridge anthropologist based his theories on sources similar to those used by

¹³ Ibidem, p. 39; a classic formulation of this model has been given by T. Parsons, *The Isolated Coniugal Family*, in: *Sociology of the Family. Selected Readings*, ed. M. Anderson, Harmondsworth 1980 (text from 1955), although he points out that residence in separate houses and absence of common ownership do not denote the severance of emotional ties (p. 186). This is a controversial question which, in my opinion, has been artificially exaggerated in literature. For the historical concept of the household and family see: D. Herlihy, *Family*, "American Historical Review" 1991, vol. 96, for Poland see: M. Koczerska, *Rodzina szlachecka w Polsce późnego średniowiecza* (The Noble Family in Late Medieval Poland), Warszawa 1975.

¹⁴ Stone's view that family relations were crude, patriarchal before the 18th century has been lately criticized by M. Ingram, *Church Courts. Sex and Marriage in England 1570-1640*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 142ff. who says that romantic love could be more frequent in the lower classes.

¹⁵ See in particular: A. Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism*, London 1978.

¹⁶ A. Macfarlane, *Marriage*, Chapter 2. The results of the studies conducted by B. Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound. Peasant Families in Medieval England*, New York 1986, also contradict the assertions of Ariès and de Mause that medieval parents took little interest in their children.

Stone, but he enriched them with references to common law, court registers and censuses, which makes his conclusions more general. He has illustrated his key thesis that nothing had changed between the late Middle Ages and the 19th century by the diary of Ralph Joselin, a clergyman who lived in the 17th century. Making use of this single example, he has shown that blood ties beyond the nuclear family and the household were weaker than the bonds of friendship between neighbours¹⁷.

Edward Shorter's conclusions cover a wider social field. Having noticed an increase in illegitimate births in 18th century birth registers, Shorter concluded that the formation of the new capitalist society was accompanied by a sexual revolution in the second half of the 18th century¹⁸. In his view, industrialisation (also proto-industrialisation) made it possible for women to reject the traditional restrictions and look for previously condemned experiences, also sexual ones. Shorter's provocative theories met with strong criticism. He was accused of bending source evidence to suit his own purpose and of using a too narrow source base¹⁹. Critics pointed out that premarital conceptions had been frequent also before the middle of the 18th century and that the change in the situation of women was not a result of capitalism, but rather of urbanisation. They also pointed out that the increase in illegitimate births had coincided with the general rise in fertility and that illegitimate births had occurred mainly in a specific group, called bastard-bearers by Peter Laslett²⁰.

The next way which Anderson has distinguished in approaching the question of the family and household is the demographic approach. It contains two currents: (Henry's) strictly demographic current and the historical-sociological current developed by English historians rallied round Peter Laslett in the

¹⁷ A. Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Joselin, a Seventeenth Century Clergyman. An Essay in Historical Anthropology*, Cambridge 1970, p. 149, the ties between children and their godparents were not very close either.

¹⁸ This theory has been formulated more cautiously by D. Levine, *The Family Formation in the Age of Nascent Capitalism*, New York 1977.

¹⁹ See, for instance, the following articles: W. R. Lee, C. Fairchilds, L. Tilly as well as J. W. Scott and M. Cohen in the volume *Marriage and Fertility*, ed. R. I. Rotberg, T. Rabb, Princeton 1980; M. Anderson, *Approaches*, p. 58.

²⁰ P. Laslett, *Long Term Trends in Bastardy in England*, in: *Family Life and Illicit Love*, Cambridge 1977, pp. 147ff., and P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen, R. M. Smith, *Bastardy and Its Comparative History*, London 1980.

Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure²¹. Henry's strictly demographic method provides information mainly on the age when marriages were contracted, the number of births, the intervals between the successive generations, the order of deaths and the average lifespan. The records in public registers make it possible to widen the questionnaire in order to see the social aspects of demographic behaviours.

Among the most important results of researches into registers are the conclusions on the age when marriages were contracted in Western Europe (later than had previously been thought, 28–30 years in the case of men and about 26–29 in the case of women), on family planning (at least in some social groups) which had existed since the 16th century, and on great geographical mobility (since at least the middle of the 18th century). The weakness of the method is that it does not show the real shape of households, for the registers contain data concerning mainly demographic events and lack information on the age when children left their parents' home, the number of employed servants, and similar questions²².

The theory that late marriages and the large percentage (6–10%) of celibate persons were specific of the demographic regime in north-western Europe was put forward by the English demographer John Hajnal. Like Henry, he was interested in the question of marriage after the Second World War. When

²¹ For the genesis of the two currents see: A. E. Imhof, *Einführung in die Historische Demographie*, München 1977, pp. 12ff.; for the French school and the results of its studies: L. Henry, *Historical Demography*, in: *Population and Social Change*, ed. D. V. Glass, R. Revell, Cambridge, Mass. 1972 and M. Lachiver, *Badania nad zaludnieniem Francji XVI–XVIII w. Osiągnięcia minionego ćwierćwiecza i perspektywy*: (*Studies on the Population of France from the 16th to the 18th Century*). The Achievements of the Last 25 Years and the Prospects), "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej" 1977, vol. 25; idem, *Od demografii historycznej ku historii postaw populacyjnych 1952–1982 (From Historical Demography to the History of the Population's Attitudes)*, "Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski" 1984, vol. 15.

²² J. Dupaquier, *W jaki sposób demografia historyczna pomaga nam w zrozumieniu współczesnych faktów demograficznych (How Historical Demography Helps Us Understand Contemporary Demographic Facts)*, in: *Studia nad gospodarką, społeczeństwem i rodziną w Europie późnofeudalnej*, ed. J. Topolski and C. Kuklo, Lublin 1987; K. Mandemakers, *New Approach to the Study of Migration in the Netherlands during the 19th and 20th Century. First Results of the Historical Sample of the Netherlands*, in: *The Art of Communication*, ed. G. Jaritz, I. Kropac, P. Teibenbacher, Graz 1995; S. Åkerman, *Evaluation of the Family Reconstitution Technique*, "Scandinavian Economic History Review" 1977, vol. 25.

comparing data from the 1940s and 1950s with information from censuses from the beginning of the century he noticed that in all European countries the age at marriage had dropped and that fewer persons lived a celibate life. He then went back to the 17th century and found that the realities at that time were closer to the data from ca 1900 than to those from contemporary times. The existence of the above-mentioned specific demographic regime was confined to Western and Northern Europe (excluding the Mediterranean zone) up to a line from Leningrad to Trieste. In Hajnal's opinion, this specific demographic regime, unique on a world scale, was due to the fact that in this part of Europe the young man had to be economically independent, to have a piece of land or his own household if he wanted to marry. The late age at marriage was the most important way of limiting the number of offspring²³. This is why the Malthusian barrier to a rise in population (hunger) quickly vanished in Western Europe²⁴. The large demographic potential inherent in this regime made possible a quick rise in population when there was a demand for additional labour and when new possibilities of livelihood arose. An over twofold increase could be seen in England as early as the 18th century and in the whole of Europe in the 19th century, but it never assumed such catastrophic dimensions as it now has in the Third World.

The European model of marriage has been researched by many scholars. Particularly worthy of notice is the work by Swedish historian, Sten Carlsson, who tried to find out whether the marriage model described by Hajnal also applied to Sweden in the 18th and 19th centuries. According to Gustav Sundbärg's calculations, based on Swedish population statistics, the percentage of unmarried, 40–49 year old women amounted to 13% at the end of the 18th century, to 21% in the middle of the 19th century, and to 24% in the 1920s. These differences were due to the peasant girls' tendency to get married, a tendency which existed until the second half of the 19th century. While the percentage of noble women and townswomen living in celibacy amounted to 25% already in the 18th century and was as high as

²³ J. Hajnal, *European Marriage Patterns in Perspectives*, in: *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*, ed. D. V. Glass, D. E. C. Eversley, London 1965.

²⁴ As regards England see: *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*, ed. J. Walter, R. S. Schofield, London 1989.

40% in the 19th, over 90% of peasant daughters chose marriage as their way of life up to the middle of the 19th century and only 12–13% of the daughters from the poorer groups of peasants lived in celibacy. Let us point out that both in the countryside and in towns marriage was contracted rather late (at the age of 25, on the average). In towns and among the nobility marriage was of a patriarchal character, which was manifested in the great difference in the age of the newlyweds. In towns men were usually 5–10 years older than their wives, in villages 2–3 years older, while among poor peasants the partners were of the same age. Naturally, towns had a high percentage of widows²⁵.

Nearly twenty years after his article on European marriage pattern, Hajnal published a text on the formation of households in north-western Europe and other parts of the world (from Tuscany, through Russia, to China and India). In the conclusion he pointed out that it was a common feature of the households in the countries in which the West European marriage pattern dominated to have a group of young, unmarried servants, who accounted for at least 6–10% of the total population. In western societies service was a natural stage between the time when a young person left his/her native home at the age of 15–19 and marriage. Hence, it was typical of Western Europe that the contraction of marriage meant the setting up of a new household²⁶.

The unique development observed by Hajnal in Western Europe was attributed to the development of individualism and finally of capitalism in that area²⁷. It was stressed that the custom that independence was an indispensable condition for setting up a family favoured thrift and the development of possessive individualism, which in turn were indispensable elements of capitalist mentality.

²⁵ S. Carlsson, *Fröknar, mamseller, jungfrur och pigor. Ogifta kvinnor i det svenska ståndssamhället*, Uppsala 1977; as regards the age when marriage was contracted see: Ch. Lundh, *Giftemålsmönster i Sverige före det industriella genombrottet*, Lund 1993.

²⁶ J. Hajnal, *Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System*, in: *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, ed. R. Wall, J. Robin and P. Laslett, Cambridge 1983.

²⁷ A. Macfarlane, *The Origins*; idem, *The Culture of Capitalism*, Oxford 1987; P. Laslett, *The European Family and Early Industrialisation*, in: *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism*, ed. J. Baechler, J. A. Hall, M. Mann, Oxford 1989. The development of individualism under the influence of Christian civilisation in the medieval period is also discussed by J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, Cambridge 1983.

The knowledge about European family and the demographic regime in old times increased considerably between the appearance of Hajnal's first and second text. As early as 1965 there appeared Peter Laslett's famous book *The World We Have Lost*, and four years later his article on the average size of a household in England from the 16th to the beginning of the 19th century²⁸. Laslett's conclusions undermined the well-rooted view about the evolutionary development of the family, from extended structures to the nuclear family²⁹.

Frederik Le Play, a classic of the evolutionary approach, distinguished three ideal family types in the second half of the 19th century:

1. The patriarchal family of primitive societies; its characteristic feature was its extended structure, the result of the fact that all sons stayed on at home.

2. *Famille souche*, popular in European peasant communities; it usually consisted of two married couples: father and mother, and a son with his wife. The other children, irrespective of sex, usually left parental home, and if they stayed on, they usually did not marry. In the patriarchal family as well as in the *famille souche* unquestionable power was in the hands of the head of the family, usually the grandfather in a three-generation family³⁰.

3. The nuclear family, typical of urban working class communities, in which the authority of the head of the family was weaker than in the first two types; the structure of families of this type was unstable, children leaving home at an early age.

²⁸ P. Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, London 1965; idem, *Size and Structure of the Household in England over Three Centuries*, "Population Studies" 1969, vol. 23.

²⁹ For more details about the evolutionistic current in research on kinship see: S. Szykiewicz, *Pokrewieństwo. Studium etnologiczne (Kinship. An Ethnological Study)*, Warszawa 1992, pp. 14ff. and 292ff.

³⁰ There is a controversy about the definition of *famille souche*. According to L. K. Berkner (*The Stem Family and the Development Cycle of the Peasant Household: an 18th Century Austrian Example*, "American Historical Review" 1972, vol. 77, p. 399) and E. A. Hammel, P. Laslett (*Comparing Household Structure over Time and between Cultures*, "Comparative Studies in Society and History" 1974, p. 92) it is sufficient if two couples, those of the father and of the son or daughter, live together; according to M. Mitterauer and R. Sieder (*The European Family. From Patriarchy to Partnership*, Oxford 1982, p. 33) a crucial but unappreciated element of the definition is that the father maintains the position of the head of the family.

Le Play's typology, the direction of the evolution suggested by him and his negative appraisal of the nuclear family which, not being stable, did not provide adequate support to the individual, was adopted in sociology thanks to Emil Durkheim³¹.

The team of researchers from the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, directed by Laslett, collected the most reliable registers of population from 100 English parishes which showed that in three centuries, from 1574 to 1821, the average size of a household in England had not changed; it amounted to 4.75 persons, fluctuating between 7.22 (6.63 excluding London) and 3.63. The differences in family size did not depend on any particular period or area, they just happened by chance. According to Laslett, the average size of households began to decrease in the second half of the 19th and in the 20th century; this process cannot be linked to the introduction of a general retirement pension system which, on the face of it, might lead to a decrease by relieving children of the duty of looking after their old parents.

In the pre-industrial epoch the English households were small and had a simple structure. Only some 10% of the households were inhabited by extended families (parents and collateral relatives). It was only in the 19th century that this percentage rose to 15–20%³². Two-generation families dominated (72%), while as many as 24% families consisted of one generation. Three- and four-generation families lived in only 4% of all households. Households in the Netherlands and northern France had a similar structure³³.

Thanks to these observations, Laslett formulated the characteristics of the West European family; its main features were: late marriages, the absence of great age differences between the spouses (at first marriage), the frequent occurrence of first marriages in which the woman was several years older, the small size of households, its nuclear structure and the presence of untrained servants³⁴. The presence of servants was not confined to

³¹ M. Anderson, *Approaches*, pp. 22ff.

³² In the pre-industrial epoch relatives accounted for only 3% of the population.

³³ See the texts in the volumes: *Household and Family in Past Time*, ed. P. Laslett, R. Wall, Cambridge 1972, and *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, ed. R. Wall, J. Robin, P. Laslett, Cambridge 1983.

³⁴ P. Laslett, *Characteristics of Western Family Considered Over Time*, in: *Family Life and Illicit Love*, Cambridge 1977.

villages. Servants also existed in urban households but it was women who dominated there, contrary to the situation in the countryside³⁵. Aristocratic houses were organized differently; men dominated there in the service not only of the master but also of the mistress of the house.

The disappearance of servants is a relatively recent happening. In Western Europe changes first affected servants in aristocratic houses; their number had been gradually reduced in England from the middle of the 16th century, this was followed by their feminisation. These changes are thought to have been due, on the one side, to the rising costs of keeping up large residences and on the other, to the royal ban on private military units (1468 and 1504). Let us point out that from the middle of the 17th century there were fewer and fewer representatives of the gentry among the servants in aristocratic houses, which means that the social prestige of service had declined. Armed men, who often did not live in their employers' house, were replaced by valets and haiduks, whose main function was to look after their employers' comfort³⁶.

In the second half of the 19th century, servants were no longer an integral part of peasant households and gradually began to be treated on a par with farm labourers. Separate quarters were built for them, and as regards the demographic side, the change led to an increase in the percentage of servants in their 30's or 40's³⁷. In towns the category of domestic servants survived

³⁵ See: A. Fauve-Chamoux, *Female Surplus and Preindustrial Work: the French Urban Experience*, in: *Socio-Economic Consequences of Sex-Ratios in Historical Perspective, 1500-1900. Proceedings of the Eleventh International Economic History Congress*, ed. A. Fauve-Chamoux, S. Sogner, vol. 5, Milano 1994; C. Kuklo, *Z problematyki badań nad feminizacją gospodarstw domowych w miastach polskich u schyłku XVIII w. przy użyciu komputera (Computer-Employing Researches on the Feminisation of Households in Polish Towns at the End of the 18th Century)*, in: *Przemiany społeczne a model rodziny. Pamiętnik XV powszechnego zjazdu historyków polskich*, ed. A. Żarnowska, Toruń 1995. It was the large presence of female servants that was responsible for the specific sex ratio in European towns, in which women dominated, a considerable part consisting of single women above the average age of marriage.

³⁶ Literature on servants in country houses and in towns is very rich. See, for instance: M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, Harmondsworth 1980, pp. 84ff.; K. Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250-1600*, Cambridge 1988; F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, Oxford 1990; C. Fairchild, *Domestic Enemies. Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime*, Baltimore 1984; S. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Seventeenth Century France*, Princeton 1983; J. Gutton, *Domestiques et serviteurs dans la France de l'ancien regime*, Paris 1981.

longer. In 1900 it was still the largest occupation category among women, but the number of household servants gradually decreased to 1–3 persons. The occupation vanished almost completely after the Second World War³⁸.

Laslett and his collaborators did not confine themselves to a characterisation of the West European family pattern. The comparative research initiated by them required a scheme that would make it possible to classify households as explicitly as possible (see Table 1).

Table 1. Types of Family Households according to Peter Laslett

I	<u>Households of single persons</u>
1a	Widows and widowers
1b	Single persons or of unknown marital status
II	<u>Households not formed by families (unmarried persons)</u>
2a	Siblings
2b	Relatives from outside the nuclear family living together
2c	Unrelated persons
III	<u>Nuclear families (married couples with or without children)</u>
3a	Childless couples
3c	Widowers with children
3d	Widows with children
IV	<u>Extended families</u>
4a	Families extended by kin-linked individuals of older generation
4b	Extended families (with grandchildren)
4c	Extended families having kin-linked individuals of the same generation (siblings, relatives outside the nuclear family)
4d	Extended families with individuals of the older, younger or the same generation or of the collateral line
V	<u>Multiple families (at least two married couples)</u>
5a	The hosts and parents or other representatives of an earlier generation
5b	The hosts and married children or other representatives of a younger generation
5c	The hosts and married relatives from a collateral line
5d	The hosts and married relatives from the older, younger or the same generation
VI	<u>Families of unspecified structure</u>

Source: P. Laslett, Introduction in: *Household and Family*, p. 31

³⁷ For peasant servants in the countryside see: A. Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England*, Cambridge 1981; M. Mitterauer, *Servants and Youth*, "Continuity and Change" 1990, vol. 5; for Poland see: M. Kopyński, *Młodość i młodzież na Kujawach w końcu XVIII w. Rzecz o czeladzi i służbie w świetle spisów parafialnych z 1791 r.* (Youth and Young People in Kujawy at the End of the 18th Century. *Farm Hands and Servants in the Light of Parish Registers from 1791*), "Przegląd Historyczny" 1995, vol. 86; towns: C. Kukło, *Z problematyki*, op. cit.

³⁸ M. Anderson, *Approaches*, p. 27.

Having compared different areas, they have distinguished, in addition to the north-western type, also the Central European, East European and Mediterranean patterns. In the last two zones marriage was not closely connected with the establishment of a separate household and was contracted much earlier.

What was characteristic of Eastern Europe (Russian provinces) was that marriages were contracted there at an early date, that the young couples lived with their parents after marriage, and that the household consisted not only of the parents and their children but also of relatives. Households consisting of two or more couples, related directly or collaterally, dominated among peasants and farm labourers, leading to a concentration of family workforce. This was accompanied by almost a complete lack of hired labour. These features are the most essential characteristics of the East European model. The fact that the average household consisted of 10–12 persons in Russian provinces and 4–6 in northern Russia is of lesser importance.

The South European (Mediterranean) model was represented by the Balkan *zadruga* and the households of Italian peasants. They were similar to the East European households.

The Central European model is represented in Laslett's typology by households from relatively well researched German-language territories, in particular Austria. What distinguished the Central European households from the West European ones was, above all, the presence of farmhands and the survival of families of the *souche* type in some regions; for it was customary for the heir to stay on in the parental home until he got married after taking over the farm from his father, which usually happened when he was 60–65 years old. After being guaranteed annuity, the parents usually continued to live with their children. In Central Europe labour force was more frequently than in Western Europe supplemented by relatives and by farmhands, a very numerous group in this region. The status of the farmhands, the type of bonds linking them with the farm owners, and the role they played are not quite clear. Census instructions which artificially included farm owners' married sons in the category of farmhands obscure the issue³⁹. It should however be pointed out

³⁹ In Opole Silesia married peasant sons were regarded as retainers; in the other parts of Silesia they were regarded as farmhands; A. K o n i e c z n y, *Ograniczenia swobody w zawieraniu małżeństw wśród chłopów na Górnym Śląsku w drugiej*

that the households of nuclear families were the predominant form of households in the Central European zone (families with relatives usually amounted to 20–25%, compared with 60% and more in Russia)⁴⁰.

The typology of European households presented above must not be regarded as a rigid, established pattern, for in many areas, in Italy, Hungary and France, various forms intermingled. The value of this typology is that it makes it possible to put the historical reality in order, and this can provide a starting point for further discussions.

The publication of the comparative study *Household and Family in Past Times*⁴¹ was followed by a discussion during which many scholars questioned the sense of this type of research and the correctness of the method used by Laslett. One of the most severe critics was the American Lutz K. Berkner. He pointed out that the sources used in the book gave incomplete data, for having been drawn up for administrative purposes (e.g. taxation), they could be deliberately distorted⁴². Early censuses could arouse similar doubts, for it was not quite clear what was meant by "household"; whether it consisted only of the persons present in the house when the census was taken or whether the person who answered the questions also mentioned persons who were temporarily away. What is more, since most English censuses lack information on age, researchers must content themselves with a static picture in which nuclear families do in fact dominate. Different conclusions would be reached if the families' development process had been taken into account, which is possible only if the age of individual persons is quoted in sources.

On the basis of parish registers from Austria in the 18th century and Germany in the 17th, Berkner asserted that where

połowie XVIII i na początku XIX wieku (*Marriage Restrictions among Peasants in Upper Silesia in the late 18th and Early 19th Centuries*), in: *Studia Śląskie*, ed. S. Wysłouch, vol. I, Wrocław 1958, p. 110. The survived fragments of the 1590 poll-tax registers from Little Poland mention many retainers, but since no mention at all is made of the presence of old parents in the households, it probably means that they were registered as retainers.

⁴⁰ For characterisation see: P. Laslett, *Family and Household as Work Group and Kin Group: Areas of Traditional Europe Compared*, in: *Family Forms*; and M. Mitterauer, A. Kagan, *Russian and Central European Family Structures: a Comparative View*, "Journal of Family History" 1982, vol. 7.

⁴¹ See fn. 33.

⁴² L. K. Berkner, *The Use and Misuse of Census Data for the Historical Analysis of Family Structure*, "Journal of Interdisciplinary History" 1975, vol. 5.

land could not be divided one son usually stayed at home; he married after getting the farm from his father who from that time on lived on annuity. In this situation the forms typical of the *famille souche* were rare (25–28% of the total number of households), a result of both late marriages and demographic factors (short lifespan). This did not prevent Berkner from asserting that *famille souche* was the dominant form, though not as a concrete set of people living under one roof but as an ideal which shaped the peasants' family strategy. The majority of the households which Laslett regarded as nuclear families remained in this state only for some time. According to Berkner's calculations, parents lived in 60% of the households headed by persons aged 18–27, so they were multiple or extended households. Where the households were headed by persons 27–47 or 48–58 years old, the percentage of extended families was 25% and 9%, respectively. When the farm was handed over to the son, which usually happened when he was about 60 years old, the household again became a multiple or an extended household⁴³.

In reply to this criticism, Laslett, together with Kenneth Wachter and Eugene Hammel, conducted an experiment in which the development of households was submitted to computer simulation, all assumptions concerning the average lifespan, the age of marriage, the inheritance principles (primo- or ultimogeniture) and the systems of family organisation being fixed. The simulation showed that demographic factors did not have a decisive influence on the shape of households. Moreover, a closer analysis of Berkner's data cast doubt on the precision of his definition and his reliability in the treatment of sources⁴⁴. A detailed analysis of the relatively few English censuses which contain information on age has fully confirmed Laslett's earlier conclusions.

As a matter of fact, the discussion between Laslett and Berkner was a dispute over the range of conclusions which can be drawn from censuses which present only a static picture of reality. The approach of Berkner, who regards the age of persons

⁴³ L. K. Berkner, *The Stem Family*; *idem*, *Inheritance, Land Tenure and Peasant Family Structure: a German Regional Comparison*, in: *Family and Inheritance. Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200–1800*, ed. J. Goody, J. Thirsk, E. P. Thompson, Cambridge 1976.

⁴⁴ K. Wachter, E. A. Hammel, P. Laslett, *Statistical Studies of Historical Social Structure*, New York 1978, in particular Chapter 6.

mentioned in censuses as a pivotal variable, is defined as life-cycle approach in demography and family sociology. It was pioneered by R. Seebohm Rowntree who in a study on poverty in English towns, published in 1902, depicted the correlation between a family's material situation and the stage of its development. Poverty was the most frequent in two stages of life: in the first few years after marriage and after the cessation of occupational activity⁴⁵. As regards peasant households, similar aspects were stressed by Alexander Chayanov, whose ideas, even before the English translations of his studies, were transferred to western sociology of rural areas by Pitrimin Sorokin⁴⁶. It is now generally accepted in the theory of peasant economy that there is a close interdependence between the a family's stage of development, the size of its farm and the accumulation of the means of production and capital⁴⁷.

At the suggestion of the Chicago school (W. Thomas, E. Burgess, E. Hughes) the life-cycle approach became a generally accepted research method among family sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s. It was given a theoretical foundation in the 1950s and 1960s by the studies of Evelyn M. Duvall and Reuben Hill. In their approach the families' development stages are determined by demographic factors, such as the birth of

⁴⁵ B. S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, London 1902; against this background R. J. Morris discusses the connection between the life cycles of the individual and the way in which entrepreneurs managed their property in English towns in the 18th and 19th centuries, in: *The Middle-Class and the Property Cycle during the Industrial Revolution*, in: *The Search for Wealth and Stability*, ed. T. C. Smout, London 1979.

⁴⁶ After C. Young, *The Family Life Cycle. Literature Review and Studies of Families in Melbourne, Australia*, Canberra 1977, pp. 6ff. In Polish literature an outline of the family's life cycle has been given by E. Frątczak, *Cykl życia rodziny. Podstawowe pojęcia i metody analizy (The Life Cycle of the Family. Fundamental Concepts and Methods of Analysis)*, in: E. Frątczak, J. Józwiak, B. Paszek, *Metodyka badań cyklu życia jednostki i rodziny — wybrane aspekty (The Methods of Examining the Life Cycle of the Individual and the Family — Selected Aspects)*, Warszawa 1991.

⁴⁷ A. P. Wiatrak, *Dochody i akumulacja w gospodarstwie chłopskim (Incomes and Accumulation in a Peasant Farm)*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 9–21, distinguishes the following stages: initial stage marked by an accelerated accumulation of the means of production and restricted consumption; mature stage characterised by decreased investments on means of production and a rise in consumption; and the stage of decline marked by the decapitalisation of means of production, lack of investments, increase in production costs and a drop in incomes. This model has been applied to economic history by J. Kochanowicz, *Pariszczyźniane gospodarstwo chłopskie w Królestwie Polskim w I połowie XIX wieku (The Peasant Soccage Farm in the Polish Kingdom in the First Half of the 19th Century)*, Warszawa 1981.

successive children and the socialisation stages connected with the children's age. The first stage lasts from the day of marriage to the birth of the first child, the second stage lasts until the oldest child is three years old (the beginning of the pre-school period), and the third, until the child is seven years old (beginning of school), etc.⁴⁸ These criteria cannot be applied to the past for few children went to school then and the successive life cycles, from childhood to old age, were not measured by age but by change in the function performed towards the environment⁴⁹. Even though it is difficult precisely to define the borders between the successive stages of the development cycle of families, the life cycle approach is very valuable for it gives at least an indirect insight into gradual changes in the composition and structure of families.

The last research method distinguished by Anderson is the economic approach. According to the supporters of this interpretation, family structures and family behaviours depend mainly on such factors as the system of inheritance and production relations. This theory is understood by economists and ethnologists as well as by lawyers (inheritance).

The fundamental tenet of this research current is the conviction that production was the dominant function of families in pre-industrial time, for the structure of households and family strategies, of peasants as well as craftsmen, can be explained only by referring to production relations and the inheritance principles⁵⁰. Summing up the importance of inheritance, the British anthropologist Jack Goody writes: "Transmission *mortis causa* is not only the means by which the reproduction of the social

⁴⁸ These views have been summarised by C. Young, *The Family Life-Cycle*; criticism of ahistoricity: G. Elder, *Family History and the Life Course*. "Journal of Family History" 1977, vol. 2; T. K. Hareven, *The Family Cycle in Historical Perspective: A Proposal for Developmental Approach*, in: *The Family Life-Cycle In European Societies*, ed. J. Cusenier, M. Segalen, The Hague 1977.

⁴⁹ M. Mitterauer, R. Sieder, *The European Family*, pp. 50ff.; J. Modell, *Into One's Own: From Youth to Adulthood in the United States 1920-1975*, Berkeley 1989; J. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770 to the Present*, London 1974.

⁵⁰ B. Gałęski, *Socjologia wsi — pojęcia podstawowe (Rural Sociology — Basic Notions)*, Warszawa 1966, pp. 69ff.; M. Mitterauer, R. Sieder, *The European Family*, pp. 40ff.; A. Wyrobisz, A. Wyczański, *La famille et la vie économique*, "Studia Historiae Oeconomicae" 1985, vol. 18; Anglo-Saxon research on urban families has also been discussed in detail by A. Wyrobisz, *Rodzina w mieście w dobie przedprzemysłowej a życie gospodarcze. Przegląd badań i problemów (The Urban Family in the Pre-Industrial Era and Economic Life. A Review of Research and Problems)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" 1986, vol. 77.

system is carried out ...; it is also the way in which interpersonal relationships are structured. ...Consequently a different quality of relationships, varying family structures, and alternative social arrangements (e. g. greater or lesser migration, age of marriage, rates of illegitimacy) will be linked to different modes of transmission"⁵¹.

An article by the American anthropologists W. Goldsmith, E. Jakobson and E. J. Kunkel is the most consistent attempt to present these interdependences in a global perspective⁵². According to them, *famille souche* dominated in areas in which the inherited property could not be divided, the multiple family (*patrilocal joint family*) in territories in which the land was divided only among the sons, and the nuclear family in places where land was divided among sons and daughters. However, this schematic division cannot be maintained. Lutz Berkner and Franklin Mendels have pointed out that these model interdependences occur only if a community consists of independent producers who use family members as their workforce, if there is no market and no possibility for migration. Only in such communities will indivisibility of property lead to the formation of *famille souche*, and full divisibility among sons and daughters to the domination of nuclear families. All intermediate forms will give peasants a variety of choices, and the picture of household structures will not be so clear⁵³. Some critics have even asserted that the inheritance systems may change quickly and radically under the pressure of demography⁵⁴.

Since it is not possible unequivocally to link family systems with inheritance systems, researchers interested in peasant families and peasant economy have looked for some explanation in the system of values and types of social structure functioning in individual communities. According to the classics of this interpretation, William Thomas and a Polish researcher Florian Znaniecki, what characterises peasant economy is, first and

⁵¹ J. Goody, *Introduction*, in: *Family and Inheritance*, p. 1.

⁵² W. Goldsmith, E. Jakobson, E. J. Kunkel, *The Study of the Peasant Family*, "American Anthropologist" 1971, vol. 73, pp. 1062ff.

⁵³ L. K. Berkner, F. Mendels, *Inheritance Systems, Family Structure and Demographic Patterns in Western Europe, 1700-1900*, in: *Historical Studies of Changing Fertility*, ed. Ch. Tilly, Princeton 1978, pp. 213, 223.

⁵⁴ K. Davis, *The Theory of Change and Response in Modern Demographic History*, "Population" 1963, vol. 29, p. 351.

foremost, the will to survive and reproduce the social status, and not interest in profits⁵⁵. This is the aim of family strategy which determines the size and structure of peasant households. Let us stress however that the Thomas-Znanięcki pattern can be seen mainly on the peripheries of world economy, where capitalist farming has not yet developed.

Alexander Chayanov's approach to the problem of peasant holdings and peasant families was closer to the theory of economics. Being convinced that classic economics was unable correctly to explain the peasant economy, he did not refer to sociological and ethnological concepts but tried to build a modified economic theory, using theoretical implements. The theory was to take into account the specific character of peasant farming, especially the indivisibility of the peasant's income and lack of interest in profits⁵⁶. Chayanov's microeconomic model explains the peasant family farming in which the family is the only source of labour. It was not his aim only to simplify the model, for he was describing Russian peasantry with its typical extended families composed of many generations. Chayanov deserves the credit for having drawn attention to the fact that peasant farming depended on family development cycle. The Russian economist's model was later applied to Polish conditions during the early modern period, to southern France and to southern Italy where fishing dominated⁵⁷.

The key tenet of Chayanov's theory is the assertion that the size of production depended on the size of the family (number of consumers) while the purchase of land, tenure and a periodic redistribution of land in the Russian provinces in which rural

⁵⁵ W. Thomas, F. Znanięcki, *Chłop polski w Europie i Ameryce (The Polish Peasant in Europe and America)*, vol. I, *Organizacja grupy pierwotnej (Organisation of the Primary Group)*, Warszawa 1976.

⁵⁶ For a characterisation of Chayanov's approach and anthropological perspective see: J. Kochanowicz, *Spór o teorię gospodarki chłopskiej. Gospodarstwo chłopskie w teorii ekonomii i w historii gospodarczej (Dispute over the Theory of Peasant Economy. Peasant Farm in the Theory of Economics and in Economic History)*, Warszawa 1992, pp. 73ff.

⁵⁷ W. Kula, *Dwór a rodzina chłopska (The Manor House and the Peasant Family)*, in: *Teoria ekonomiczna ustroju feudalnego*, Warszawa 1983; J. Kochanowicz, *Pańszczyźniane gospodarstwo*, pp. 73ff.; D. Kertzer, *Anthropology and Family History*, „Journal of Family History” 1984, vol. 9; L. K. Berkner, J. K. Schaffer, *The Joint Family in the Nivernais*, „Journal of Family History” 1978, vol. 3; P. Laslett, *Family and Household as Work Group and Kin Group*, pp. 553ff. criticises such measures, pointing out that Chayanov wrote about specific conditions.

communities (*mir*) predominated were used to ensure that consumer needs were met by production capacity. It was observed in southern Italy that the size of the apportioned land depended on the family size, which means that the peasant was interested in the greatest possible number of family members (artificially creating consumer needs) to persuade the landowner to lease out a larger piece of land to him.

What was of crucial importance for the structure of households and inner family relations was the decline of households' productive functions, connected with the appearance of alternative possibilities of employment⁵⁸. This led to the emancipation of the nuclear family from the tutelage of neighbours and to an increase in the number of incomplete families; for re-marriage ceased to be an economic necessity. It is an open question when this happened. Until recently it was generally believed that urbanisation and intensified migration put an end to the tradition-rooted rural family. This view was questioned by Michael Anderson who pointed out that in the 19th century the families in Lancashire towns were larger and more extended than in the countryside. He explained this by high housing costs as a result of which old persons lived together with their children who already had their own families. When migration to towns intensified, relatives, even distant ones, provided the necessary support for the newcomers⁵⁹. The importance of this aspect has been stressed by American researcher Tamara K. Harven. Her research on working class families in Amoskeag Mills in Manchester, New Hampshire at the beginning of the 20th century has shown that the good of the entire family, not only the nuclear one, was taken into consideration in strategic decisions concerning such questions as emigration to an industrial centre or the employment of individual family members in a factory. This means that even though all the family members worked outside the household, the family maintained its productive functions. Family bonds exceeding the household, assumed particular importance during crises, when ties between members of a larger family, which usually weakened in the second or third generation

⁵⁸ M. Anderson, *The Relevance of Family History*, in: *Sociology of the Family. New Directions for Britain*, Keele 1979, pp. 58, 63ff.

⁵⁹ M. Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire*, Cambridge 1971.

after the arrival in town, were revived⁶⁰. It is worth stressing that in her research Hareven used interviews on a mass scale, which gave her a deeper insight into the question of authority and the mechanism of family decision-making than researchers into a distant past usually have.

However, it was not only the decline of the productive function that could lead — over a long period of time — to changes in households. Changes in the profile of family production could have similar consequences⁶¹. It was proto-industrialisation that acted as a catalyst. Rural handicrafts made it possible to depart from the traditional restrictions imposed by dependence on the farm, resulting in the lowering of the average age of marriage. In craftsmen's families marriage was contracted earlier, which meant that they had more children who, however, did not increase the ranks of servants. They left home later than children in traditional peasant families for the parents tried to have them as long as possible as additional workforce⁶².

It was French and English historians who have laid the foundations for the rich development of historical demography in the last thirty years, the former by working out and popularising the family reconstitution method, the latter by a convincing presentation of the mechanism of population rise in England and by initiating census-based studies on households. These studies were conducted mainly by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. Their characteristic feature which ensured them success was regular cooperation with local amateur historians, very numerous in Great Britain, to whom the Cambridge Group addresses the periodical "Local Population Studies". Even though some of Laslett's methodological principles may be regarded as controversial, nobody questions his

⁶⁰ T. K. Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: Family Work in a Planned Corporation Town, 1900–1924*, in: *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700–1930*, New York 1977, p. 202 (this is an extensive summary of her monograph of the same title); W. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *Chłop polski*, point out that ties with the family in Poland become weaker and weaker in successive generations.

⁶¹ See the concept of ecotypes of family households: D. Gaunt, *Familj, hushåll och arbetsintensitet. En tolkning av demografiska variantioner i 1600- och 1700-talets Sverige*, "Scandia" 1976, vol. 62.

⁶² R. Braun, *Early Industrialization and Demographic Change in the Canton of Zurich*, in: *Historical Studies of Changing Fertility*, ed. Ch. Tilly, Princeton 1974; F. Mendels, *Proto-Industrialization: The First Phase of Industrialization Process*, "Journal of Economic History" 1972, vol. 32; D. Levine, *The Family Formation*.

theory that nuclear families have been the predominant family type in England during the last four hundred years. This theory has inspired many comparative studies conducted in other countries. When Laslett began his research it seemed that English sources were so poor that no serious conclusions could be based on them. Compared with English sources, the Polish *status animarum* sources and civilian–military lists from 1791–1792 are a mine of information, but have so far been used only to a limited extent⁶³.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

⁶³ They have been characterised by I. Gieysztorowa, *Wstęp do demografii staropolskiej (Introduction to Old Polish Demography)*, Warszawa 1975; see the analysis by S. Borowski, *Próba odtworzenia struktur społecznych i procesów demograficznych na Warmii u schyłku XVII w. na przykładzie Dobrego Miasta i okolicy (Tentative Reconstruction of Social Structures and Demographic Processes In Warmia at the End of the 17th Century, with Dobre Miasto and Its Environs taken as an Example)*, "Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski" 1975, vol. 8; C. Kukło's book *Z problematyki*, quoted above, and C. Kukło, W. Gruszecki, *Informacyjny system rekonstrukcji rodzin, gospodarstw domowych i społeczności lokalnych w Polsce przedrozbiorowej (Informative System for the Reconstitution of Families, Households and Local Communities In Pre-partition Poland)*, Białystok 1994; M. Kopczyński, *Studia nad rodziną chłopską w Koronie w XVII–XVIII wieku (Studies on the Peasant Family in Poland in the 17th–18th Centuries)*, Warszawa 1998.