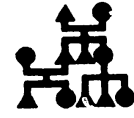


Journal of

Family
History



PEASANT HOUSEHOLD FORMATION AND THE ORGANIZATION OF RURAL LABOR IN THE VALLEY OF SEGURA DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

José Miguel Martínez Carrión

ABSTRACT: *Meant as a contribution to the recently initiated debate over household and family composition in the Mediterranean area, the study presents the first results of an investigation of class differences in family behavior in several rural communities in the Segura Basin of southeastern Iberia during a period of agrarian change. A variety of measures and classifications suggest the predominance of the nuclear family, but also that the household formation process and the family life cycle are conditioned by the land tenure system, inheritance practices, and transmission of the patrimony. Also, patterns of mobility and demographic mechanisms exert a powerful influence over family forms and household structures.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years family history has pursued changes in household and family composition, on the one hand, and the demographic characteristics of distinct social classes in the process of production and reproduction, on the other. Numerous studies of these issues have underscored that different family strategies of household formation are closely related to access to the means of production,

and to the role played by social classes in a particular socioeconomic system, notably during the transition of peasant societies to industrial capitalism (Medick 1976; Goody, Thirsk and Thompson 1976; Levine 1977, Berkner and Mendels 1978).

The analysis of peasant household organization is of particular relevance to such studies. This is due to the importance of the household in the production sphere of rural communities before and during the process

Journal of Family History
Volume 13, Number 1, pages 91-109
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ISSN: 0363-1990.

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of commercialization and spread of capitalism in the agricultural sector. Household formation and the life cycle of the peasant family are associated with the organization of rural labor, the distribution of land ownership, the system of inheritance and transmission of the patrimony, the types of crops grown and distribution of the surplus, as well as with the roles of the family members in domestic work and in the production and sale of agricultural products. Some studies of peasant household organization have demonstrated differences in demographic behavior and family structure arising from the process of internal differentiation of peasantries during the nineteenth century and the development of agrarian capitalism (Kertzer 1977, 1981; Lehning 1980; Shaffer 1982).

Consequently, the search for a dominant household type in a particular community, and for a "typical" or "universal" family type, was a misleading exercise with sterile results (Smith 1984, p. 65) when the data did not include other social and economic variables, or purely cultural factors. Considering that in the same community we are likely to encounter differing coexisting household types and family forms, the emphasis should be on determining the changing demographic behaviors and household types of different social classes as the system of production experiences modifications over specific periods of time.

To reduce the paucity of studies of peasant household composition and family size in Spain, I present in this article the first results of my investigations of class differences in family behavior during a period of agrarian change. At the same time, the article is meant to contribute to the recently initiated debate over household and family composition in the Mediterranean area (Laslett 1983). My research project encompasses several rural communities at different locations in the Segura Basin of southeastern Iberia. They include communities in which family forms could have differed due to differences in the

distribution of land tenure, land use, and inheritance systems, as well as to increasing agricultural specialization during the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth. The results presented in this article come from the community of La Ñora, located in the middle of the valley of Segura, in the *huerta* or area of intensive irrigation agriculture which surrounds the city of Murcia.

SOURCES

From the time the Cambridge Group presented its initial findings concerning family structures in western Europe (Laslett and Wall 1972) until the most recent publication (Wall, Robin and Laslett 1983), the quality of research into the sources of European family history has been high. Population lists and censuses have constituted the universal joint in the analysis of the evolution of family forms. The methodology proposed by the Group (Hammel and Laslett 1974) has been regarded as very useful for classifying households according to their complexity. Nevertheless, the scheme has been criticized for making coresidence the determining factor of domestic group structure and for not framing the question in terms of kinship relations. In some cases it was suggested that studies of household structure based exclusively on the determination of family type and composition were flawed by the failure to take into account the dynamics of the developmental cycle of the domestic group (Berkner 1972; 1975). In this regard, it was demonstrated how household complexity depended upon different phases of the life cycle when family composition was correlated with the age of head of household. This relationship tended to escape notice if analysis was limited to the general data in synchronic censuses.

Synchronic analyses can distort our view of household organization unless more refined procedures sensitive to variations in

the development cycle of the family are employed as well. In recent years increasing emphasis has been placed on the study of the dynamics of household organization (Harven 1974, 1978; Van de Walle 1976; Segalen 1977; Mitterauer and Sieder 1979; Finlay, Velsor and Hilker 1982; Reher 1984; Janssens 1986). As the majority of these authors have indicated, a detailed study of a census or population list in relation to other demographic and socioeconomic variables need not be an obstacle to the analysis of the dynamics of household structure and family forms. Whenever the sources permit, it is best to study such dynamics by working with linked, successive population lists but, when this is impossible, it is still desirable to work within the limitations of synchronic censuses.

The community selected for the present study is richly documented despite the existence of lengthy intercensal periods. First, there is interesting variable statistical information regarding social issues. The censuses (*padrones*) from 1850 on contain comprehensive listings of complete households, including the ages of coresident members and the profession of the household head. This allows us to correlate family composition with the occupational structure of the domestic groups. The analysis of the census therefore constitutes a good point of departure for the study of household structure. I have analyzed the censuses for the years 1850, 1879, 1901 and 1925, which sequence permits estimation of household dynamics as reflected in the developmental cycle of families. The results are reported in terms of the household classification scheme proposed by the Cambridge Group. Parish registers have been employed to explain the diverse demographic patterns manifested by the different social groups. Finally, I wish to emphasize that although the selected community had fewer than two thousand inhabitants towards the end of the historical period under consideration, the size of the sample in each category is sufficient (Willigan

and Lynch 1982, p. 199) to support the contention that the data are representative of an ample rural area of intensive irrigation agriculture in the *huerta* of Murcia.

POPULATION, MIGRATION AND THE FIRST PHASE OF AGRARIAN CAPITALISM

Before analyzing family forms, I first propose to examine population trends during the emergence of capitalism in Murcian agriculture. Throughout the period, the agrarian sector dominated economic production and exercised a powerful influence over social groups, in particular the peasantry. Among the peasants there was evident increasing specialization and diversification, a process that combined former peasant economic patterns with the social relations characteristic of capitalistic modes of production. The period also witnessed a growing importance of the market and increase in the circulation of goods.

The bases of commercial agriculture were laid in the middle decades of the nineteenth century and developed effectively throughout its second half. By the 1840s, the importance of incipient agricultural specialization and commercialization was reflected in the presence of a substantial group of mule-skinners in La Ñora and surrounding villages. They transported goods, particularly paprika, to the interior markets of Castile, and later to all of northeastern Iberia (Madóz, 1845, XII: 201). It was the cultivation of pepper, destined for the production and commercialization of paprika; and somewhat later, other commercial crops that brought specialization in agriculture to this area in the middle of the last century. Paprika acquired predominance due to the considerable benefits yielded by its commercialization in the Spanish interior and the subsequent increase in demand for it in international markets. The other commercialized products were grown to meet the daily needs of the nearby urban markets. In any event, there

Table 1
Emigration in the Demographic Growth of La Ñora, 1841-1930

| <i>Years</i> | <i>Population Totals</i> | <i>Population Growth (%)</i> | <i>Migration (%)</i> |
|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1841-1850 | 1696-1539 | -9.2 | -24.2 |
| 1851-1860 | 1539-1540 | 0.1 | -13.5 |
| 1861-1870 | 1540-1531 | -0.6 | -14.7 |
| 1871-1880 | 1531-1524 | -0.4 | -16.9 |
| 1881-1890 | 1524-1628 | 6.8 | -10.3 |
| 1891-1900 | 1628-1854 | 13.9 | 0.9 |
| 1901-1910 | 1854-1883 | 1.6 | -13.4 |
| 1911-1920 | 1883-2186 | 16.1 | -3.0 |
| 1921-1930 | 2186-2175 | -0.5 | 27.1 |

were few initial demographic consequences of this agricultural specialization since, as reflected in Table 1, before the decade of the 1880s there was modest population loss. It would seem that the emigration of poor peasants and workers to the North African coasts (Vilar 1975; Pérez Picazo 1979; Nadal 1984, p. 175) explains the situation. Emigration produced relative stasis in the population by siphoning off the surplus labor supply that could not be absorbed by existing levels of agricultural specialization and cultivation. Emigration therefore served as a compensating and regulating mechanism in a socioeconomic system under considerable demographic pressure, in which the employment expectations of the growing populace were still frustrated by a more than sufficient labor supply.

The formation of a world market for agricultural products at about 1880 led to intensified agricultural competition, stimulating specialization of Murcian agriculture. In the district under consideration, there was now increased incentive to grow the most remunerative crops. The large landowners decided to invest in the crops in highest demand (Martínez Carrión 1988). The small peasant proprietors and poor tenants became involved in the process as well. To produce

for the market required, in addition to specialization, an intensification of production. This was achieved by employing the low-cost surplus labor force intensively on small units of exploitation.

In this context emigration decreased, particularly in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, although there was still seasonal labor migration during the agricultural slack season. Consequently, the real growth rate of the population increased. This gain was also a reflection of a decreasing age at first marriage for women, a matrimonial strategy that was uncommon in peasant families. If, in the period 1850-1879, women married at the average age of 23.5 years, between 1880 and 1899 the mean was 21.7 years (see Table 2). The younger age at marriage resulted in a slight increase in marital fecundity and in the mean number of offspring per couple, although in the latter case it is also important to take infant mortality rates into account. In point of fact some studies demonstrate that infant deaths had a levelling effect, returning the overall rate of population increase to nearly its former levels (Martínez Carrión 1983, pp. 259-274). As we shall see, it is interesting to relate this factor to household composition and organization.

Table 2
Age at Marriage in La Ñora, 1850-1935
(in years)

| <i>Years</i> | <i>Males</i> | <i>Females</i> |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1850-1879 | 26.4 | 23.5 |
| 1880-1899 | 25.1 | 21.7 |
| 1900-1929 | 26.1 | 23.1 |
| 1930-1935 | 26.4 | 24.4 |

On the other hand, the tendency to marry earlier could have other consequences, such as the entry of women as quickly as possible into a family work cycle. While women had a long-standing involvement in the domestic economy, by the end of the nineteenth century they intensified their participation by increasing the time they devoted to the peasant agricultural "enterprises." In this fashion the family's income increased. In any event, increased agricultural production was associated with intensification of the peasant labor factor, particularly on the small holdings of the tenants, day workers and small scale peasant proprietors.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, population pressure on the land accentuated the fragmentation of holdings. This was facilitated by land tenure laws, which also may have been the cause of the increased emigration of the first decade. In large measure, the improvement of holdings and their more intense use restrained migration until, in the decade of the 1920s, migration received renewed impetus (see Table 1) from external employment opportunities and favorable wage scales. In this period Murcian peasants and day laborers along with other peasants from southeastern Iberia, migrated to the agricultural districts of France (Nadal 1984, pp. 197-204; Horne 1985).

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND THE PEASANT FAMILY ECONOMY

I will now analyze peasant household organization and changes in family structure during the process of agricultural specialization and commercialization. As can be seen in Table 3, the nuclear family, without servants, was the predominant household form in the community. More than 80% of the households were composed of parents and children, married couples residing alone, or simply widows or widowers with their respective children. In addition, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century there was a progressive increase in the percentage of simple households formed by nuclear families. Thus the mean size of the household had declined considerably by the end of the century, an outcome unrelated to fertility control since, as we have noted, fecundity actually increased due to earlier age at marriage for women.

Household formation was based on a system of neolocal residence of nuclear families. This was directly associated with patterns of access to marriage for both males and females, and supported by the partible inheritance system that treated family descendants equally. This system of neolocal residence and marital patterns seems to have been common throughout most of southern Iberia, in contrast to the northern parts of the peninsula (Rowland 1983; Douglass present issue) where a patrilocal system of stem family households and late age at marriage apparently predominated. I believe, however, that a closer examination of the Murcia data, utilizing concrete local examples and taking into account the multiplicity of socioeconomic and cultural factors affecting the development cycle of the family, would yield a more complex picture of family forms and household organization.

A detailed analysis of the censuses, as reflected in Table 4, shows near total absence of stem families. Extended family households

Table 3
Composition and Evolution of Household Types in La Ñora, 1850-1925

| <i>Type</i> | <i>1850</i> | <i>1879</i> | <i>1885</i> | <i>1895</i> | <i>1901</i> | <i>1925</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | 6.2% | 3.8% | 4.8% | 9.5% | 9.5% | 7.0% |
| 2 | 1.1 | 1.8 | 1.6 | 0.2 | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| 3 | 82.6 | 88.2 | 92.0 | 89.2 | 87.3 | 81.0 |
| 4 | 7.9 | 5.4 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 2.6 | 8.0 |
| 5 | 2.2 | 0.8 | — | — | — | 3.0 |
| 4+5 | 10.1 | 6.2 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 2.6 | 11.0 |
| N = | 357 | 391 | 374 | 474 | 495 | 526 |
| Mean Size of Household | 4.29 | 4.06 | 3.62 | 3.53 | 3.69 | 4.23 |

Note: For household types, see Table 4.

are rare in La Ñora and only acquire a certain importance in 1850 and 1925. In these years, the notable fact is that the extension is to collateral members, which suggests that for these periods certain mechanisms were operative that redistributed the nuclear family's poverty along family kinship lines. In fact, the increase of extended households, including multiple family ones, corresponds to the periods of intense emigration and demographic pressure. At such times there is a degree of coresidence of collateral kinsmen with the nuclear family, the most frequent arrangement being a household comprised of a married couple with a few young children and one other collateral relative, a nephew or niece, cousin, or sibling of one of the spouses. The relative worked as a laborer on the peasant holding and in the domestic economy, contributing thereby to the family income. The coresidence of kinsmen, generally in their productive years, helped to balance the possible disequilibrium within the household between consumers and producers during the period when the offspring were too young to contribute while they were a burden upon it. The economic function of this type of kinship-based assistance in extended households of a non-stem-family variety has been noted by other

investigators (Anderson 1972, pp. 227-228; Janssens 1986, pp. 35-38).

It should be kept in mind that a considerable number of extended families were created by the addition of widows or widowers to the nuclear family. There were cases of married couples with children who had at home a widowed parent, either out of the desire to assist or as leverage to gain a part of the patrimony. At times the youngest son remained to occupy his parents' dwelling and to accede to the lands that his father either rented or owned. In these instances the extended family had a contractual function in addition to its social support one. The logic of the system, however, was such that children married out, leaving the elderly couple to its own devices. Once one of the elderly spouses died, the other was more likely to live alone than to move in with one of the married children. The relative unimportance of widowers, and particularly widows, seems to demonstrate the point. Physical impairments and the limited economic means of the elderly meant that the majority, and particularly the widows, were condemned to live alone (Ruiz-Funes 1983, p. 59).

Throughout the nineteenth century the nuclear family household was characteristic of the peasant and rural laborer households.

Table 4
Household Composition in La Ñora (in percentages)

| <i>Type</i> | | 1850 | 1879 | 1901 | 1925 |
|-------------------------------|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Solitaries | (a) widowers | 0.8 | 0.5 | 2.2 | 0.7 |
| | (b) widows | 4.2 | 2.1 | 6.5 | 4.4 |
| | (c) bachelors | 1.1 | — | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| | (d) spinsters | — | 0.2 | 0.4 | 1.3 |
| | (e) separated males | — | 0.5 | 0.2 | — |
| | (f) separated females | — | 0.5 | — | 0.2 |
| | Subtotal: | | 6.2 | 3.8 | 9.5 |
| 2. No family | (a) coresident siblings | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.4 |
| | (b) coresident relatives of other kinds | 0.5 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 0.6 |
| | (c) unrelated persons | — | — | 0.2 | — |
| | Subtotal: | 1.1 | 1.8 | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| 3. Simple family households | (a) married couples alone | 11.8 | 13.3 | 19.6 | 11.2 |
| | (b) married couples with children | 57.1 | 63.4 | 55.6 | 57.8 |
| | (c) widowers with children | 3.9 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 1.5 |
| | (d) widows with children | 9.8 | 9.0 | 9.7 | 10.3 |
| | (e) separated males with children | — | 0.2 | — | — |
| | (f) separated females with children | — | — | — | — |
| | Subtotal: | 82.6 | 88.2 | 87.3 | 81.0 |
| 4. Extended family households | (a) extended upwards | 2.2 | 1.8 | 0.8 | 3.6 |
| | (b) extended downwards | 2.0 | 1.3 | 0.2 | 2.1 |
| | (c) extended laterally | 3.4 | 2.1 | 0.4 | 2.3 |
| | (d) extended upwards & laterally | 0.3 | 0.2 | — | — |
| | Subtotal: | 7.9 | 5.4 | 2.6 | 8.0 |
| 5. Multiple family households | (a) secondary unit(s) up | 0.5 | — | — | 0.4 |
| | (b) secondary unit(s) down | 1.4 | 0.8 | — | 2.4 |
| | (c) units all on one level | 0.3 | — | — | 0.2 |
| | Subtotal: | 2.2 | 0.8 | — | 3.0 |
| TOTAL: | | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| N = | | 357 | 391 | 495 | 526 |

Influenced by the system of inheritance as well as the marital practices, family forms and household organization were also strongly affected by land tenure arrangements, peasant agricultural practices, and the agricultural produce and labor markets in the community.

Household composition was associated with creation of an economically independent family unit. The process was initiated by courtship which put into motion certain socioeconomic mechanisms related to marital strategies. The bride and groom were judged in terms of the value of their

patrimony and dowry, as well as in terms of the reputation of their respective families. They entered into the marriage coldly, guided by considerations of convenience, having elected their partner in terms of the availability of work, a house and wealth (Ruiz-Funes 1983, p. 73). Naturally, in reasonably well-off peasant circles marital strategies were subject to rigorous control by the head of the family, since marriage occasioned transfer of goods, wealth and land. On the other hand, among the poor peasants and salaried laborers the overriding concerns were reputation (a "good family") and employment prospects. There was a class endogamy strengthened by kinship ties which then reproduced the system over time.

Inheritance played an important role. Egalitarian succession practices determined the transmission of the patrimony in the community, a situation characteristic of much of southeast Iberia. Nevertheless, land tenure and agricultural exploitation systems better explain household formation and the developmental cycle of nuclear families. In the period under consideration, land ownership was characterized by the existence of small peasant holdings, of which the majority of peasants had only usufruct rights. That is, most of the holdings were owned by absentee landlords, who rented the parcels to peasant families. In a few instances, the large- or medium-scale landlord cultivated his holdings directly by contracting the labor of rural workers. Sharecropping was rare, except in the case of orange orchards, which were insignificant in this part of the Murcian *huerta*. The land, then, if concentrated in a few hands with respect to ownership, was actually widely distributed among the peasantry through the rental system. In general, this configuration of small rented parcels was the basis for the organization of work within peasant families. Consequently, in the censuses the majority of families are listed as *colonos* (non-landowning peasant renters) or as *jornaleros* (workers), the most

numerous social category in the population of the Murcian *huerta*.

It is therefore not possible to speak of a homogenous peasantry when discussing family organization. In the present instance, in addition to peasant renters, there is a group of better-off peasants, small- and mid-scale proprietors who own land and work it themselves, and who appear in the censuses as *labradores*. Their manner of exploiting their land varied as well. There were those who worked the land directly by using only the family's labor resources and those who contracted salaried workers qualified in tasks requiring special skills, particularly for raising commercial crops. However, the latter were rare in this particular sector of the *huerta*. There were also those who rented out a small part of their land, as was sometimes the case with the mid-scale landowners. On the other hand, there were the poor peasants who were unable to meet their minimal needs by working their own holdings and were therefore obliged to sell their labor to others during the agricultural slack season. This group must have been in desperate straits at the end of the nineteenth century, since it sometimes had to sell its small parcels of land because it could not meet the capital demands of the new agriculture. An increase in attachments, loans and mortgages in the *huerta* for the decades of the 1880s and 1890s is readily demonstrable (Pérez Picazo, 1979, pp. 116-119).

The emergence of capitalism in the agricultural system triggered a process of differentiation within the realm of the peasant family, converting some members into proletarians and others into small proprietors. This prompted a process of fragmentation, although, at the same time, certain mechanisms favoring consolidation were also evident. In any event, as capitalistic practices penetrated into the countryside, expressly the area under investigation, they affected a system of small-scale holdings with neolocal, simple family households. The

household consisting of a nuclear family not only predominated, its proportion increased as the process of agricultural specialization proceeded and attained an incidence of 90% by the decades of the 1880s and 1890s. If, in the mid-nineteenth century, considerable demographic pressure and emigration was associated with a 10% incidence of extended and multiple family households, the expansion of commercial agriculture by the end of the century brought an almost complete disappearance of such family forms.

The new conditions of capitalistic agriculture, and demographic pressure as well, favored progressive fragmentation of holdings and a greater yield from each. Improvements in agricultural "enterprises" were reflected in the decline of emigration and in increases in production as the system was commercialized (Martínez Carrión 1988). This process evolved due to the penetration into the agricultural system of intrinsically capitalistic formulas, but the penetration combined with certain elements of the former peasant economy, particularly the use of family labor. In a similar situation in the Valencian *huerta*, irrigation agriculture was intensified by a greater emphasis on the direct involvement of the peasant labor force (Ruiz Torres 1981; Garrabou 1985). The intensification depended on labor organization involving nuclear family peasant households and early age at marriage for women, as can be seen in the data for the final decades of the last century. The decline in the mean age at marriage for females has been documented during this period for other urban and rural areas (Martínez Carrión 1983, p. 141, 1984, p. 30; Iriso Napal 1985, pp. 35-6), with the most notable decline taking place in the rural context.

Early marriage and neolocality and the resulting nuclear family households were the necessary and sufficient conditions for obtaining an effective return on the family's labor. Income was increased in large measure by intensifying the work of not only men but

of women and children as well, through increased specialization in commercially viable, labor-intensive forms of cropping. The growing need in the last third of the nineteenth century and first years of the twentieth to increase agricultural production to meet the demands of growing urban centers within the national market and of industrialized nations with higher living standards, improved employment prospects within the areas of intensive irrigation. This enhanced the likelihood that recently married, young couples would attain economic independence.

The system of allocating agricultural holdings relied upon contractual arrangements (most of them verbal) between proprietors and renters. Frequently the parcels rented to a family were fragmented and reallocated to children as they married and moved out during the lifetime of the parents. These arrangements, however, varied according to the period in question. Extreme forms of parcelization were most apparent during the second half of the nineteenth century, and particularly during the final decades. This period was characterized by intensification of plow agriculture, diversification of crops (including rotation of vegetable and grain cultigens) as well as production for export. Parcelization also entailed greater use of inputs such as chemical fertilizers and increased mechanization, even though the abundance of available labor and intensification of family involvement remained the most important factors. It was possible to discern a simultaneous emphasis on household self-sufficiency in food production and on surplus production by the household for the marketplace.

It is in this economic context that we can explain the persistence of, and even increase in, the incidence of nuclear family households as the predominant coresidential and work unit within the agricultural system. Improvements of holdings, despite their progressive fragmentation, resulted in a net increase in

Table 5
Socio-Occupational Structure of Heads of Household, La Ñora, 1850-1925

| <i>Social Groups</i> | <i>1850</i> | <i>1879</i> | <i>1885</i> | <i>1895</i> | <i>1901</i> | <i>1925</i> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| I | 76.7 | 77.1 | 89.1 | 85.8 | 85.6 | 67.7 |
| II | 14.5 | 10.3 | 3.1 | 7.2 | 7.9 | 6.1 |
| III | 1.3 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 3.2 | 3.6 | 15.2 |
| IV | 7.5 | 7.7 | 3.4 | 3.8 | 2.9 | 11.0 |
| | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

- I. Poor peasants, renters, day laborers.
- II. Well-to-do peasants, *labradores*.
- III. Artisans and secondary-sector workers.
- IV. Merchants, muleteers, professionals and other service-sector personnel.

returns from the commercialization of traditional and new activities: vegetables, fruits, silkworm-raising and, above all, paprika production. Cultivation of mulberry trees and care of silkworms was women's work exclusively, exacerbating the sexual division of labor within the peasant economy. If formerly women worked only in domestic tasks, by the second half of the nineteenth century they were increasingly involved in production and commerce, at times taking charge of the marketing of surplus agricultural products in nearby cities. This growing importance of female labor in the protoindustrial economy of the past century, and particularly in the area of agricultural production, is amply documented (Tilly and Scott 1978; Nash 1984; Saito 1983; Lee 1981, pp. 92-96).

By the decade of the 1920s the specialization of cropping was completed, but the population increase of the early twentieth century had resulted in extreme parcellization. The small size and proliferation of the individual holdings undermined the capacity of a part of the peasantry to maintain itself. Consequently, there was a notable, indeed a surprisingly high, incidence of emigration during this period. Yet the emigration had a discernible demographic factor as well. While during the decade of 1910-1920 we can

detect a certain decrease in fecundity, the increase of the birth rate at the end of the nineteenth century and the decline of infant mortality at the beginning of the twentieth (Martínez Carrión 1984) meant that on balance there was still a net increase in household size (as reflected in Table 3). In such a context, an increase in the mean size of the family produced a surplus labor supply that could not be absorbed by the local labor market. Although now the labor market was somewhat more diversified through the inclusion of service and artisanal sectors, emigration was still the escape valve for the peasant population.

We need further to elaborate upon the nature of the changes in the labor market with regard to their influence on household structure. In the 1925 census the incidence of extended family households increased, although the nuclear family household continued to be the predominant form (81%). The reaction of individual families to the Malthusian labor circumstances was reflected not only in household composition, which continued to be nuclear, but also in other demographic indicators. These include the pronounced emigration to destinations considered earlier and a rise in the mean age at marriage and the reduced likelihood of the formation of new households. The mean age

Table 6
Distribution of Households According to Composition and Age of Family Head, La Nora, 1850-1925

| <i>Family Form</i> <i>1850</i> | <i>Age of Head</i> | | | | | | <i>Total</i> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | <i>- 30</i> | <i>30-39</i> | <i>40-49</i> | <i>50-59</i> | <i>60-69</i> | <i>70 +</i> | |
| 1. Solitaries | 3.7 | 1.1 | 5.8 | 5.7 | 13.77 | 15.8 | 6.2 |
| 2. No Family | 3.7 | 1.1 | — | 1.1 | — | 5.3 | 1.1 |
| 3. Simple | 85.2 | 90.8 | 81.4 | 82.8 | 76.5 | 63.2 | 82.6 |
| 3.a. | 18.5 | 11.5 | 2.3 | 9.2 | 13.7 | 52.6 | 11.8 |
| 3.b. | 66.7 | 77.0 | 61.6 | 50.6 | 39.2 | 10.5 | 57.1 |
| 3.c.d. | — | 2.3 | 17.4 | 23.0 | 23.5 | — | 13.7 |
| 4. Extended | 7.4 | 5.7 | 9.3 | 6.9 | 7.8 | 15.8 | 7.8 |
| 5. Multiple | — | 1.1 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 2.0 | — | 2.2 |
| N = | 27 | 87 | 86 | 87 | 51 | 19 | 357 |
| (%) | 7.6 | 24.4 | 24.1 | 24.4 | 14.2 | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| <i>1879</i> | <i>- 30</i> | <i>30-39</i> | <i>40-49</i> | <i>50-59</i> | <i>60-69</i> | <i>70 +</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| 1. Solitaries | — | — | 1.9 | 3.7 | 10.6 | 27.8 | 3.8 |
| 2. No Family | 2.8 | — | 1.9 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 11.1 | 1.8 |
| 3. Simple | 91.7 | 95.3 | 93.3 | 88.7 | 78.7 | 33.3 | 82.2 |
| 3.a. | 27.8 | 11.3 | 7.7 | 10.0 | 21.3 | 16.7 | 13.0 |
| 3.b. | 63.9 | 77.4 | 73.1 | 63.7 | 36.2 | 11.1 | 64.2 |
| 3.c.d. | — | 6.6 | 12.5 | 15.0 | 21.3 | 5.5 | 11.0 |
| 4. Extended | 5.5 | 4.7 | 2.9 | 5.0 | 6.4 | 22.2 | 5.4 |
| 5. Multiple | — | — | — | 1.2 | 2.1 | 5.5 | 0.8 |
| N = | 36 | 106 | 104 | 80 | 47 | 18 | 391 |
| (%) | 9.2 | 27.1 | 26.6 | 20.5 | 12.0 | 4.6 | 100.0 |
| <i>1901</i> | <i>- 30</i> | <i>30-39</i> | <i>40-49</i> | <i>50-59</i> | <i>60-69</i> | <i>70 +</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| 1. Solitaries | — | 1.2 | 1.7 | 5.0 | 17.9 | 47.1 | 9.5 |
| 2. No Family | 2.7 | — | — | 1.7 | — | — | 0.6 |
| 3. Simple | 97.3 | 98.8 | 95.5 | 90.7 | 75.0 | 51.0 | 87.2 |
| 3.a. | 32.4 | 20.2 | 7.5 | 15.1 | 29.8 | 29.4 | 19.4 |
| 3.b. | 59.5 | 72.6 | 81.7 | 58.8 | 27.4 | 2.0 | 55.6 |
| 3.c.d. | 5.4 | 6.0 | 6.7 | 16.8 | 17.9 | 19.6 | 12.1 |
| 4. Extended | — | — | 2.5 | 2.5 | 7.1 | 2.0 | 2.6 |
| 5. Multiple | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| N = | 37 | 84 | 120 | 119 | 84 | 51 | 495 |
| (%) | 7.5 | 17.0 | 24.2 | 24.0 | 17.0 | 10.3 | 100.0 |
| <i>1925</i> | <i>- 30</i> | <i>30-39</i> | <i>40-49</i> | <i>50-59</i> | <i>60-69</i> | <i>70 +</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| 1. Solitaries | 3.6 | 1.8 | 5.0 | 3.2 | 13.7 | 22 | 7.0 |
| 2. No Family | 1.8 | — | 0.8 | 2.1 | 1.0 | — | 0.9 |
| 3. Simple | 82.1 | 89.2 | 85.7 | 84.2 | 70.5 | 64.0 | 81.0 |
| 3.a. | 19.7 | 5.4 | 5.9 | 6.4 | 15.8 | 28.0 | 11.2 |
| 3.b. | 58.9 | 82.0 | 65.5 | 60.2 | 37.9 | 20.0 | 57.8 |
| 3.c.d. | 3.6 | 1.8 | 14.3 | 18.9 | 16.8 | 16.0 | 12.0 |
| 4. Extended | 8.9 | 9.0 | 7.6 | 8.6 | 7.4 | 6.0 | 8.0 |
| 5. Multiple | 3.6 | — | 0.8 | 2.1 | 7.4 | 8.0 | 3.0 |
| N = | 56 | 111 | 119 | 95 | 95 | 50 | 526 |
| (%) | 10.6 | 21.1 | 22.6 | 18.1 | 18.1 | 9.5 | 100.0 |

Table 7
Household Composition by Social Group, La Ñora

| <i>Household Composition by Family Type</i> | <i>Group I</i> | | | | <i>Household Composition by Family Type</i> | <i>Group II</i> | | | |
|---|------------------|------|------|------|---|-----------------|------|-------|------|
| | 1850 | 1879 | 1901 | 1925 | | 1850 | 1879 | 1901 | 1925 |
| 1 | 2.2% | 1.9% | 4.0% | 3.5% | 1 | — | 5.0% | 15.4% | 6.3% |
| 2 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 2 | — | 2.5 | — | — |
| 3 | 87.1 | 89.4 | 93.1 | 82.9 | 3 | 87.0% | 92.2 | 79.5 | 90.6 |
| 4 | 8.0 | 6.5 | 2.3 | 8.2 | 4 | 11.1 | — | 5.1 | 3.1 |
| 5 | 1.8 | 1.1 | — | 5.1 | 5 | 1.9 | — | — | — |
| 4+5 | 9.8 | 7.6 | 2.3 | 13.3 | 4+5 | 13.0 | — | 5.1 | 3.1 |
| N = | 225 | 264 | 346 | 316 | N = | 54 | 40 | 39 | 32 |
| | <i>Group III</i> | | | | | <i>Group IV</i> | | | |
| | 1850 | 1879 | 1901 | 1925 | | 1850 | 1879 | 1901 | 1925 |
| 1 | — | 5.6% | — | — | 1 | 11.1% | 7.1% | — | 2.0% |
| 2 | — | — | — | 2.4% | 2 | — | 7.1 | — | 2.0 |
| 3 | 100% | 94.4 | 100% | 85.5 | 3 | 70.4 | 82.2 | 100 | 88.0 |
| 4 | — | — | — | 12.1 | 4 | 7.4 | 3.6 | — | 8.0 |
| 5 | — | — | — | — | 5 | 11.1 | — | — | — |
| 4+5 | — | — | — | 12.2 | 4+5 | 18.5 | 3.6 | — | 8.0 |
| N = | 2 | 18 | 18 | 83 | N = | 27 | 28 | 14 | 50 |

Note: For social groups see Table 5; for family types see Table 4.

at marriage for women increases from 21.7 years in 1890-1899 to 23.1 years in the period 1920-1929, while that for men goes from 25.1 to 26.2 years. Both sexes married later in response to a period of decreasing employment prospects.

The response of families was to reduce the number of their offspring, though this tendency is difficult to discern over the short term. More evident is the appearance of greater complexity of family forms as a means of ameliorating the progressive impoverishment of the household economy, at least in the social sectors most affected — i.e., the landless peasantry, salaried laborers and artisans.

FAMILY LIFE CYCLE AND SOCIAL CATEGORIES

An analysis of the life cycle of the family allows us to understand the dynamic phases of household development. Table 6 demonstrates that around 1925 most extended families appeared only after the head of the household was 50 years of age or older. Quite possibly, this is an aspect of the migration among and progressive impoverishment of certain sectors of the population (as discussed earlier). It is these sectors which manifest extended household forms as a means of procuring assistance and collaboration in productive activities. The additional members, who became supplemental family workers, were frequently nephews and nieces,

cousins, or brothers and sisters of the head of household or his spouse. At the same time, the importance of ascendent relatives in periods of crisis and limited employment opportunities suggests that the head of household and the nuclear family were willing to assume the burden of a needy grandparent. Relatives coresiding with the nuclear family in extended family households are most notable among industrial workers, artisans, and in the most impoverished sector of the peasantry (see Table 7).

As shown in Table 7, the greatest incidence of complex households occurs in Group I, which consists of the poorest peasants and salaried workers. Similarly, during the middle of the last century the well-to-do peasants and *labradores* manifested a significant incidence of extended households, reflecting the operation of the inheritance and land tenure systems. Pronounced emigration and the division of agricultural holdings possibly explain the presence of certain collaterally extended household forms. The nuclear family predominates in all of the social categories, but we can detect extended and complex forms in the landless peasantry and, to a lesser degree, among the well-to-do landed peasants, merchants and professionals. Among the artisans and industrial workers, except for the period around 1925, there is little indication of non-nuclear family forms at anytime. The analysis by social group suggests a certain correspondence between formation of nuclear family households and better employment prospects and family income. In the same fashion, complex family forms correlate with periods of crisis in a Malthusian labor market. But the factors which produced one or the other household form were very different for the members of each social group and were shaped by their access to employment, the organization of their labor and their position within the land tenancy system.

The analysis of household dynamics in life-cycle terms demonstrates continuity through

the heads of households over time. It is also evident that the proportion of heads of households under 50 years of age increased towards the end of the nineteenth century. This development was likely associated with the increased employment opportunities in the agricultural sector. The Murcian intensive irrigation agricultural system, like its Valencian counterpart, required a large labor force as it underwent specialization and progressive commercial expansion. This favored a decline in the marital age for women, which is reflected in the numbers of married couples with or without children who had not attained either 30 or 40 years of age (see Table 6). Another notable aspect in terms of historical developments is the absence at the end of the nineteenth century of heads under 40 years of age. Conversely, they are present in both 1850 and 1925. As with the previous analyses, the distinctions should be refined by social category.

In sum, the weight of evidence suggests an overall high incidence of nuclear family households in the Segura basin. These households were characterized by partible inheritance, not only in land ownership but also access to land, and a high degree of commercialization of agriculture. Rental of small land parcels both permitted and consolidated the neolocal, nuclear family household system. This is verified by the low incidence of stem families and the unimportance of extended families. Their infrequent appearance is related to the need to complement domestic labor and the necessity to increase family income. To a lesser degree, extension was also due to the practice of social support, as reflected in the practice of bringing needy elderly persons into the nuclear family household. The occasional presence of collateral relatives in the household as well was adaptive strategy to confront specific crisis situations and a form of family solidarity before a hostile world (Howlett 1983, p. 44). In the rural context, the development of extended household

Table 8
Correspondence Between Mean Age at Marriage of Women and Household Size by Social Group

| <i>Social Group</i> | <i>Household Size</i> | | | | <i>Mean Age of Women at Marriage</i> | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------|------|------|--------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|
| | 1850 | 1879 | 1901 | 1925 | 1850-79 | % < 25 | 1900-29 | % < 25 |
| I | 4.12 | 4.02 | 3.59 | 4.00 | 24.3 | 63.8 | 23.3 | 74.6 |
| II | 4.88 | 4.35 | 4.00 | 4.78 | 22.6 | 74.7 | 21.9 | 78.6 |
| III | — | 4.15 | 5.16 | 4.61 | 22.7 | 71.4 | 22.7 | 77.1 |
| IV | 4.83 | 4.06 | 3.92 | 4.75 | 22.4 | 80.0 | 23.3 | 74.6 |
| \bar{X} | 4.29 | 4.06 | 3.69 | 4.23 | 23.5 | 69.0 | 23.1 | 74.6 |

Note: For social groups, see Table 5.

forms could also be associated with the sharecropping system. However, this form of agriculture exploitation was practically non-existent in the district and in the community under consideration, although it did exist in other parts of the headwaters of the valley of the Segura (Martinez Carrion 1983). Consideration of this aspect must await further data collection and analysis.

MEAN HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND MARITAL STRATEGIES

Finally, we need to analyze the mean household size in relation to the family's social class, taking into account the different roles individuals play in the processes of production and reproduction. Household composition is affected by changes in age at marriage which is a basic point of departure for the development of the household, even determining its size. It has frequently been assumed that in protoindustrial societies there is a close relationship between the marital pattern, based on the incidence of marriage and the age of women at marriage, and population growth (Wrigely and Schofield 1980). Differing behaviors and strategies regarding marriage also have been discerned, corresponding to short- and long-term economic fluctuations and having distinct outcomes in different social classes (Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm 1981). These

mechanisms have resulted in a range of household sizes associated with differing work demands and systems of inheritance within the family economy.

The data demonstrate a certain correlation between mean age at marriage and occupational coefficients. Unfortunately, marital age data for women by social grouping for the final period of the nineteenth century are lacking; however, the available information, as reflected in Table 8, suggests the importance of the marital age factor in determining reproductive rates and mean size of households. The first impression is of the existence of different social patterns corresponding to mean size of household. The social categories with the greatest income and wealth have a larger mean household size than do the landless peasant families. That this correlates with mean age of women at marriage is seen in the fact that in Group I, the category with the smallest mean size of household, women marry late. A possible factor augmenting the mean size of households for the well-to-do peasants (Group II) is the presence of live-in servants; in fact, this was relatively rare and did not affect appreciably overall household size. The larger units of this group appear rather to be related to reproductive rates that were in turn a function of the wealth and well-being of the family and of the availability of employment opportunity within the family "enterprise."

Table 9
Mean Age of Males at Marriage by Social Group, and Age Differences Between Spouses in La Ñora

| <i>Years</i> | <i>Mean Age of Males</i> | | | | <i>Age Difference Between Spouses</i> | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| | <i>I</i> | <i>II</i> | <i>III</i> | <i>IV</i> | <i>I</i> | <i>II</i> | <i>III</i> | <i>IV</i> |
| <i>Social Groups:</i> | | | | | | | | |
| 1850-1880 | 26.5 | 26.6 | 24.2 | 26.3 | 2.2 | 4.0 | 1.5 | 4.0 |
| 1900-1909 | 25.4 | 25.8 | — | 28.5 | 2.8 | 5.3 | — | 4.5 |
| 1910-1919 | 26.1 | 26.6 | — | 27.1 | 1.9 | 3.9 | — | 4.3 |
| 1920-1929 | 26.3 | 25.1 | 25.3 | 28.0 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4.9 |
| 1900-1929 | 26.0 | 25.9 | 26.1 | 27.9 | 2.7 | 4.0 | 3.4 | 4.6 |
| \bar{X} Males: | 26.2 | 26.3 | 25.1 | 27.1 | | | | |
| | | | | | 2.8 | 4.0 | 2.4 | 4.3 |
| \bar{X} Females: | 23.4 | 22.3 | 22.7 | 22.8 | | | | |

Note: For social groups, see Table 5.

In the remaining social groups there is a notable similarity to the pattern for the well-to-do peasants regarding household size; however, the connotations differ. In fact, although Groups II and IV have quite similar mean household sizes at the end of the period under consideration, the marital strategies operative in each differed considerably. The male peasants who between 1900 and 1929 married at the average age of 25.9 years, selected brides with a mean age of 21.9, while the males in Group IV married later, at 27.9 years of age, as did their spouses at 23.3 years. Curiously, Groups II and IV reflect a similar age gap between spouses, one considerably higher than that obtaining in the other social categories. Clearly, any consideration of mean household and family size must take into account more than just social factors; it must include economic ones as well since the same conjunction of factors does not necessarily affect all of the social categories equally.

Household size would seem to be related, then, to age at marriage. Household formation and family size, however, were conditioned by oscillations in the marriage market produced by social and economic change. In

other words, economic arrangements exerted an influence over household size, and the force of that influence depended upon the social class. We find certain differences in marital behavior in this regard. While the males of Groups I and II married at similar ages, the females in the two categories did not. In fact, among the renters, landless peasants and laborers there is a tendency for brides to be older, while among the well-to-do, landed peasants they are younger. The age-at-marriage difference between the sexes in Group I is about 2.8 years (excluding the period 1880-1899 for which we lack information). The difference increases to four years for persons in Group II. This suggests that despite the possible interest of the couple in forming a household as quickly as possible, marriage is postponed somewhat among the renters and laborers in order to allow the bride to increase her dowry. There are examples of women who worked as seamstresses at home or as domestics in nearby cities, postponing their marriage until they had a dowry that was sufficiently large to permit establishment of their own independent households. The struggle by brides from the most impoverished social sector to

acquire a nest egg with which to confront the first difficult stages of the family cycle seems to have delayed marriage.

It may also be the case that the women from modest homes postponed marriage in the hope of finding a better-situated husband. In any event, the availability of a dowry and the possession of wealth conditioned the celebration of a wedding and the immediate formation of a new household. Modifications of the system in one way or another depended on employment prospects, and, it seems, greater opportunities towards the end of the nineteenth century, given the intensification of irrigation agriculture, created the possibility of early marriage. This is reflected in the declining mean age at marriage of women and other developments in the family life-cycle during the period.

The most advanced marital ages for males and the greatest difference between the sexes with regard to mean age at marriage are found among the merchants, professionals and social services sector (Group IV). These males marry late and show a propensity for marrying women more than four years younger. It is possible that their advanced age at marriage is due to the geographical mobility associated with such professionals as teachers and doctors, as well as with fruit and paprika merchants, muleteers, and salesmen. Another characteristic of this group, which differentiates it from the others, is the fact that over time there is progressive increase in the mean age at marriage. This outcome deserves more detailed treatment than is possible here; nevertheless, I believe that the increase is associated with the extreme prenuptial physical mobility manifested by this group at the end of the nineteenth century and, particularly, in the early years of the twentieth.

It is also possible to discern as early an age at marriage among the artisans and industrial laborers as that obtaining in the peasant families. This is particularly pronounced in the case of the males who in the mid-

nineteenth century married at 24.2 years of age. Their brides married at 22.7 years, which meant that the age difference between the spouses was only 1.5 years. This is in part due to the presence in the area of a large group of weaver families (though absent from the census, they are listed in the parish marriage rolls). It is likely that their employment prospects were good since there was a demand for their products in the nearby urban markets, and therefore they married early. In addition, we can assume for this group that women participated in production. With both spouses involved from the outset, the capital necessary for household formation accumulated rapidly and there was continued prospect for high returns in the family income. At the same time, children in the initial phases of the family life cycle were better supported during the time they were not productive members of the household. The act of having small children involved an economic risk, since they created an imbalance between the household's productive capacity and its needs. The early marriage of spouses with good employment prospects in the artisanal sector may have helped these households overcome or at least ameliorate the poverty phase in the family cycle, said to be initiated by the birth of the first child (Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohn 1981, p. 80).

In general, early age at marriage results in a larger mean size of household, as can be seen in Table 8 for the artisans and industrial laborers. The drop in the mean age at marriage for women towards the end of the nineteenth century increased the number of large households at the beginning of the twentieth. However, the increase in household size discernible in all social categories throughout this period is due less to reduction in mean age at marriage than to an increase in fertility and, above all, to a decline in infant mortality rates at the beginning of the present century. On the other hand, infant mortality, as a reflection of poor hygiene and diet, was

most likely an important factor among impoverished peasants, renters and salaried workers. It is clear that in assessing factors determining family composition and mean size of households we must consider fecundity and infant mortality in addition to nuptiality. Some of the key factors regulating these demographic mechanisms were the possession and distribution of wealth and social control of the means of production.

CONCLUSION

The aggregate analysis of the data regarding family structure and household composition in relation to work organization and rural life in the community under consideration leads to some final considerations.

First, it is quite evident that the predominance of the nuclear family in the household formation process and the family life cycle are conditioned by the land tenure system, inheritance practices and transmission of the patrimony. In this respect the rental system in which access to small holdings is of a partible nature constitutes a critical factor in the proliferation of nuclear family households. Also, the crops grown, and the combination of a capitalistic orientation with traditional practices in the organization of rural work, influenced marital strategies, which varied over time in response to economic conditions and thereby affected family type and mean size of household. There is in fact a combination: progressive expansion of a capitalistic nature, involving specialization and commercialization and determined by market demand; and the traditional crops and practices which emphasized maximizing household returns by providing the family's food supply and meeting a local demand for agricultural produce. At the end of the nineteenth century, the diversification of commercial irrigation agriculture, intensifying production by means of a complex system of crop rotation, improved the economic prospects of

the area and facilitated early age at marriage and the formation of nuclear family households. The nuclear family, then, constituted the basic unit of household organization and the fundamental labor unit in the rural economy. The changes over time in household composition depended, in large measure, on employment prospects and demographic pressure in the local labor market.

Second, the analysis of long term trends in family forms and household composition, as well as of differences in demographic tendencies, underscores the diversity of the conditioning factors. Household composition and size varied according to social categories and were associated with differing nuptial patterns, a fact which demonstrates the danger of assuming continuity and stability of family forms over time. The pattern of mobility and the demographic mechanisms, not only with regard to nuptiality but also with respect to fertility and infant mortality, exert a powerful influence over family form and household structure. Differences in household and family formation according to social categories and the complexity of the conditioning factors alert us to the need to analyze carefully the development of the family life cycle within the context of the social and economic conditions and changes of each social group within a particular region. This viewpoint will enable us to better comprehend the historical reality affecting Iberian families, and provide a more logical explanation of the phenomena that are currently being discussed in terms of a "western Mediterranean family model."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Concepción Fenollos and Francisco J. Argente del Castillo for their assistance in gathering data for the present article. He is also grateful to Miguel Rodríguez Llopis for his comments on the text.

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