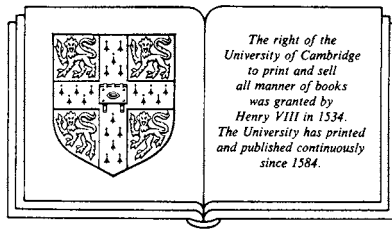


Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle

Edited by

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II

Some issues concerning families and their property in rural England 1250–1800

RICHARD M. SMITH

Property has served as a common focus in many discussions of family form. For instance, it has been seen as central in the contrast to be drawn between kinship and residence as two quite different principles of organization. One might therefore distinguish between a jurally defined corporate group linked by rights in property which its members enjoy in common and a collection of kin or indeed non-kin who share a common residence. For Peter Laslett a 'fraternal joint family' would exist only when two married brothers co-resided, but for Maurice Freedman such a family would have existed in China whenever two or more brothers were co-parceners in a family estate, regardless of whether these men were married or whether they and their respective wives and children lived in different residences.¹

To concentrate upon rights in property that are shared by family members as a fundamental variable defining or indeed determining the form taken by the family attaches to the family the specific function of control over property, including its transmission. For it is implicit in so many studies of pre-industrial societies that the most important method of acquiring property is by the process of inheritance. Implicit, too, is the assumption that inheritance normally takes place between close kin and affines. Indeed, as Goody puts it, 'transmission *mortis causa* is not only the means by which the reproduction of the social system is carried out . . .; it is also the way in which interpersonal relationships are structured'.² Furthermore, David Sabeau goes so far as to suggest that 'just as there is no such

¹ P. Laslett with the assistance of R. Wall, editor, *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 3; M. Freedman, 'Introduction', in M. Freedman, editor, *Family and Kinship in Chinese Society* (Stanford, Calif., 1970), p. 9.

² J. R. Goody, 'Introduction', in J. R. Goody *et al.*, editors, *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200–1800* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 1.

thing as a pure unmediated emotional attachment between individuals, so there is no system of obligations and duties which is not mediated through a structured set of things – namely property'.³

Jack Goody is most notable among historically minded social scientists in employing systems of inheritance as a key means of differentiating the societies of Africa, south of the Sahara, on the one hand from the societies of Europe and Asia on the other.⁴ Fundamental differences in inheritance practices Goody believes justify the ascription of sociological unity to these geographically bounded though historically varied areas.

What Goody terms homogenous systems of inheritance have predominated in Africa. There, inheritance has been sex-specific; men inherited from men and women from women. Women did not share with their brothers the property of either their father's or their mother's brothers. In Europe and Asia, on the contrary, women inherited from men (and vice versa), although there may have been restrictions on the type and amount of property that could be owned or acquired in this way. These were areas, according to Goody, characterized by 'diverging devolution' because the effect of the disposal of property to both sexes was to diffuse it outside the descent group.

By focusing on different rules determining the transmission of property in these two large geographical areas, Goody proposes to explain the structure of domestic groups and a whole cluster of interlinked elements such as marriage transactions, descent groups, forms of marriage, domestic roles and even kinship terminology. Central to this theory is the contrast he draws between African bridewealth societies and European and Asian dowry systems, in which two very different forms of marriage transactions generate far-reaching consequences for domestic organization.

The *pre-mortem* acquisition of dowry as property settled on a woman at her marriage has been, Goody believes, the major form of female inheritance in Eurasian societies. Where marriage payments occur in Africa, property is transferred not to the women but between the male kin of the groom and the male kin of the bride. Dowry systems establish a conjugal fund where the property of the husband is added to that of the wife (thereby reproducing wealth differences)

³ D. W. Sabeen, 'Young Bees in an Empty Hive: Relations Between Brothers-in-law in a Swabian Village', in H. Medick and D. W. Sabeen, editors, *Interest and Emotion: Essays in the Study of Family and Kinship* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 171.

⁴ J. Goody, *Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain* (Cambridge, 1976).

and considerable care may be taken to match the resources of each. In these circumstances Goody believes that marriages will be strongly controlled by the parental generation through, for example, the surveillance of courtship and especially through the promotion of ideologies of premarital virginity, intended to limit contact between the sexes and reduce uncontrolled claims on the state. Homogamy – marriage with an individual of the same status – is encouraged, and this is often achieved by endogamy within status groups. Although in dowry systems additional wives could bring additional resources, the matching of resources is hard to duplicate, and there are difficulties in setting up several conjugal funds. Thus the effect of dowry and the conjugal fund is to create widespread monogamy in Eurasia in contrast to the polygynous societies of Africa.

For Goody, where productive resources are scarce and intensively used they tend to be retained within the nuclear family, as the basic productive and reproductive unit. This leads to vertical (i.e. parents to children) rather than lateral transmission, and thus to 'diverging devolution', since in such circumstances provision is generally made for women as well as men.⁵ Goody accounts for the inheritance of property by women in systems of vertical transmission through the presence of economic differentiation. Where differentiation exists parents will be concerned to maintain the status of their children and the honour of the family through the settlement of property. Economic differentiation is also partially responsible in Goody's explanation for the presence of monogamous marriage in Eurasia. However, this monogamy co-exists with in-marriage between kin and as such serves to reinforce 'family' ties and to prevent the drifting of property away from the family in the event of sons being absent. Goody identifies other strategies such as adoption, concubinage, divorce and

⁵ Scarcity of land and maintenance of status provide the argument with its essential link between changes in the kinship sphere and differences in agricultural technology. Goody argues that the plough in Europe and Asia brings a fundamental increase in agricultural productivity and generates greater economic differentiation and demographic growth. Increasing numbers of people make for land scarcity, and individuals are ranked in terms of their access to this scarce resource. In contrast, Goody sees the hoe-based agriculture of sub-Saharan Africa as producing little specialization and what economic or status differentiation there was between farmers as having to do with the 'strength of one's arm or number of sons'. A common theme in studies of the relationship between agricultural intensification, increasing population density, and competition for land is a concomitant narrowing of the range of kin who have a claim to inherit property. See P. J. Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1970) and O. Löfgren, 'Family and Household Among Scandinavian Peasants: An Exploratory Essay', *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 74 (1974), pp. 36–40.

remarriage as means of combating the contribution of childlessness to the likelihood of property losses by the family.

In a bold thesis very recently published, Goody has developed the implications for 'diverging devolution' for what he sees as a highly distinctive evolution of the family and marriage in Europe from the fourth century.⁶ In its essentials Goody's arguments are concerned with explaining how the Church came to prise property away from the domestic group that in a system of diverging devolution had practised in-marriage and other strategies to maintain the ready availability of direct vertical heirs. He suggests that the early Christian Church, faced with the need to provide for people who had left their kin to devote themselves to the life of the Church, regulated the rules of marriage so that wealth could be channelled away from the family and into the Church. The Church therefore, in Goody's view, encouraged out-marriage by forbidding marriage within strictly defined degrees of kinship, encouraged celibacy, promoted the conjugal bond as an ideal, emphasized the importance of freedom of choice by the parties in a marriage and encouraged spiritual rather than natural kinship as a basis for harmonious social relations. Through the encouragement of all of these practices Goody believes that the position of women as property holders, inheritors and dispensers was enhanced insofar as the Church by its manoeuvring was further elaborating a situation in which female property holding and inheriting rights in a system of diverging devolution were already considerable.

There can be little doubt that Goody's typological scheme both of the evolution of bridewealth systems to dowry systems (i.e. the differentiation of Eurasia from Africa) and of Europe's peculiar development through the influences of the Christian Church are both stimulating and contentious and deserve to be a focus of discussion and research on marriage and property transactions and domestic organization for some time to come. Most provocative are the questions raised about how the transmission of property – whether in the form of marriage payments, *pre-mortem* inheritance, or *post-mortem* marriage inheritances – shapes both the internal structure of domestic units and economic and political processes usually construed as external to the domestic domain. What remains to be deliberated and further researched is the empirical accuracy of Goody's typology and indeed the direction of causality in the relationship between a society's property distribution, devolution

⁶ J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983).

and kinship system. In this first chapter certain of these issues will be pursued in reference to a more restricted geographical space, with a concentration on fine historical detail.

Goody is not alone in the prime role he gives to property and the mode of its devolution in determining the fundamental structure of a society. For instance, the historian Hans Medick argues that among peasant populations the necessary connection of household formation to resources which were scarce and 'which could be acquired *only* [my emphasis] by inheritance formed the decisive structural determinant'.⁷ Indeed, for certain theorists a crucial difference between workers in industry and agriculturalists is that among the latter the determinant of family forms and processes is inherited property, whereas amongst the former property recedes from centre-stage as families come into being solely as units of labour.⁸

Perhaps this juxtaposition of two hypothetical family systems deriving their forms and internal relationships from property on the one hand and their labour resources on the other is suggestive of the dangerously reductionist style of much of the work in this field. As Sabeian remarks, 'Property as the dominant category for peasant society explains, however, at once too much and too little.'⁹ In certain work we do encounter a willingness to admit that the study of the effects of inheritance customs and other property rights upon family life cannot take place within a vacuum. Some would argue, because of what they see as the very centrality of property inheritance along kin lines to the reproduction of social classes, that the maintenance of the dominant social relations of production will entail (as in the case of the medieval lord and peasant) direct supervision of the inheritance and family practices of their subordinates by the politically and economically superior.¹⁰ Others would single out for emphasis such factors as the demographic conditions prevailing in a society, the possibility of alternative income generating activities such as wage labouring or access to rights in other less tangible resources such as common grazing in open moor or marsh,¹¹ or the presence or absence

⁷ H. Medick, 'The Proto-Industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of the Household During the Transition from Peasant Society to Industrial Capitalism', *Social History* 3 (1976), p. 303.

⁸ For a widely quoted study, see D. Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (London, 1977). ⁹ Sabeian, 'Young Bees', p. 171.

¹⁰ For such views, see C. Creighton, 'Family, Property and Relations of Production in Western Europe', *Economy and Society* 9 (1980), pp. 129–67 and E. Searle, 'Seigneurial Control of Women's Marriage: The Antecedents and Function of Merchet in England', *Past and Present* 82 (1979), pp. 3–43.

¹¹ See Löfgren, 'Family and Household', pp. 35–7 and E. P. Thompson, 'The Grid of Inheritance: A Comment', in Goody *et al.*, editors, *Family and Inheritance*, pp. 340–3.

of social constraints on personal behaviour that seem to have existed in spite of property forms or indeed may have important repercussions for the way in which property devolved (i.e. even though women can inherit they may be restricted in their range of options by a rigid sex segmentation in a broader field of economic activities).¹²

i. Family labour and family land

In varying degrees the essays in this volume attempt to locate and assess the role of these mediating factors between individuals, families and their property, whether this is held on fee-simple terms or by tenures of differing levels of uncertainty. It is in some respects ironic that the one economic model of peasant farm families which to date lacks any one rival for its comprehensiveness is based on the family enterprise not as a function of its property but as a highly distinctive unit of labour. At not infrequent intervals contributors to this volume appeal to this model of A. V. Chayanov for a theoretical justification of their evidence.¹³ Those who follow Chayanov's analysis undoubtedly would be inclined to argue that the peasant economy is characterized by its social properties more than by a given degree of technological development; by social properties stemming from the importance placed upon patriarchal authority; by a preoccupation with the ratios of family land to family labour – adjustments between which were far more relevant than any concern for capital investment; by the wish to increase global income rather than the maximization of revenue per family worker; and, of supreme importance, by a family ideal which suffocated individualistic aspirations and emphasized those which worked for the good of the group.

The critical cog in this perpetually revolving but intransigently stationary wheel is the absence of a market of any sort for wage labour, leading to an inconsequential role for non-family labour in the family farm. The allocation models of classical political economy in Chayanov's view could not therefore be applied in the analysis of the peasant labour farm, for elements such as wages, profits and rents were not directly relevant in its operations. The farm could only be understood through an analysis of its internally generated needs and resources. These needs are specified as present and future family consumption requirements, and the resources are primarily family

¹² M. Cain, S. Rokeya Khanam and S. Nahar, 'Class, Patriarchy and Women's Work in Bangladesh', *Population and Development Review* 5 (1979), pp. 305–438.

¹³ A. V. Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, edited by D. Thorner, B. Kerblay and R. E. F. Smith (Homewood, Ill., 1966).

labour supplies determined solely by the size and composition of the family. This viewpoint also assumes that complementary factors such as land and capital are in variable supply so that at the farm or holding level the factor which is dynamic is the growth and decline of the individual biological family. The addition of children to the nuclear couple will expand needs relative to resources in terms of labour power, and as a consequence the family's equilibrium will shift towards increased effort and output per worker, reduced leisure and reduced *per capita*, though increased total family, income. As the children mature, the tendency is reversed, with the family dividing into new sets of nuclear couples and the cycle repeating itself. It would be expected, therefore, that the families within a local peasant economy would manifest a degree of inequality in the utilization of labour power, productivity and income per head such as is 'demographic' or at any rate 'non-social' in origin.

One might here ask the question why did Chayanov not expect households which had reached this peak to expand their farms further by taking in more land and hiring labour? Since Chayanov offers no explanation we are left to discover one ourselves. Chayanov, furthermore, assumed that the availability of means of production was variable in the short term and fixed only in the very long term. In the short term he saw the flexible supply of non-labour units as an essential condition of the family life-cycle's determination of the farm's own life-cycle. Yet, in the long run he saw the possibilities of accumulation as limited by the 'subsistence motivation' of the peasant family. In this way ideals overrode concrete influences and gave rise to an overtly anti-materialist analysis of behaviour within the peasant milieu. The independent variables are certainly not located in property or property relations but are embedded in the socio-cultural realm; 'subsistence needs' are preeminent and are a vital factor, remaining invariant and constituting wants that are culturally limited and of modest scale, for in the true peasant economy accumulation is avoided. Social mobility consequently takes on a cyclical form, carrying the typical peasant farm family during its life-time through most of the statisticians' and historians' categories of 'rich', 'middle' and 'poor' peasants.

As is patently obvious in all that has been said above, Chayanov's views stand in marked opposition to those which see rural society divided into strata made up of the permanently rich and poor. Lenin's seminal ideas on this question were important in furthering this viewpoint for he saw every human society heading towards an increasing division of labour.

Rich peasant farms, which were larger and better equipped, had a higher capital to labour ratio, found themselves in an advantageous position as far as the optimal use of the factors of production and their further accumulation were concerned. For precisely opposite reasons, poor peasant farms were at a disadvantage in any attempt to improve their economic position. Continuing accumulation of economic advantage and disadvantage led to the polarisation of peasant into rich farmers who increasingly acquired characteristics of capitalist entrepreneurs and poor farmers who lost their farms and became landless wage labourers in the employ of rich farmers, estate owners and urban entrepreneurs.¹⁴

This difference – a difference between two polar opposites – created the basis for the debate that still rages on the contrasting interpretations of the state of the Russian peasantry in the late nineteenth century and the post-revolutionary pre-collectivization phase. What relevance, it may well be asked, does it have for our discussions of family–land relations in pre-industrial England? There is very ample evidence to indicate that historians have been much influenced by Russian theorists in their attempts to explain English circumstances, especially those in the period before the sixteenth century.¹⁵ A good deal of work on late medieval English rural society sees social differentiation at work, whereby village or manorial communities became more polarized between tenants of large holdings and wage earners, foreshadowing the dichotomy between capitalist farmers and wage labourers in modern times. Indeed, it is on this question that Hilton and Postan would seem to have taken up rather different positions – the latter more inclined to stress ‘social promotion’ under the influence of late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century demographic decline, and Hilton the gradual emergence of yeoman farmers of no mean substance.¹⁶

If not easily pigeonholed in their approaches, others have certainly stressed the decline of family inheritance as a social phenomenon in the late fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth century, together with an increasing tendency for land to be transferred between rather than within families. Rosamund Faith’s pioneering study of late medieval Berkshire has been followed by others: for instance, Barbara Harvey’s analysis of the tenants of the estates of Westminster Abbey, Christopher Dyer’s magisterial work on the west midland manors of

¹⁴ V. I. Lenin, ‘The Development of Capitalism in Russia’, in *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1972), p. 70.

¹⁵ P. Gattrell, ‘Historians and Peasants: Studies of Medieval English Society in a Russian Context’, *Past and Present* 96 (1982), pp. 22–50.

¹⁶ M. M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society* (London, 1972), pp. 139–42; and R. H. Hilton, *The Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates* (Oxford, 1947), pp. 94–105 and 147–8.

the Bishops of Worcester, which are given further consideration in this volume, Andrew Jones' and Timothy Lomas' syntheses (both in the process of publication) of land exchanges respectively among the tenants of late medieval Bedfordshire and on the manors in north-east England of the Bishop and Cathedral Priory of Durham and Merton College, Oxford – all these studies, it would seem, reaffirming the late medieval loosening of family attachments to land and the existence of a very active *inter-vivos* traffic in land purchases and leases.¹⁷ Whether this land exchange system was compatible with, or contrary to, the fundamental importance of the peasant family labour farm in the conceptual frameworks that these scholars took to this period is, except (notably) in Dyer's work, almost impossible to establish, for this particular question was never faced squarely. Yet Professor Hilton, in the review of rural society in the midlands in the late medieval period which he attempted in his Ford lectures, was certainly fairly curt in his dismissal of Chayanovian concepts, going so far as to state that the Russian economist's discovery about the relation between family size and the size of the holding were not necessarily applicable outside Russia.¹⁸

To date, the clearly differentiated schools of thought regarding stratification in the countryside that have developed with regard to the later middle ages are less readily apparent in writings on the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth centuries. If a conceptual framework of any coherence has been employed it must come from Postan, who in his introduction to an edition of a Peterborough Abbey manuscript bearing the title *Carte Nativorum* undertook a wide-ranging review of the origins and functioning of a village land market.¹⁹ The core of Postan's argument concerns the practical problems of the peasant family: how to meet these needs that varied throughout its life-cycle. The variation in needs dictated the necessity

¹⁷ R. J. Faith, 'The Peasant Land Market in Berkshire', unpublished University of Leicester Ph.D. thesis, 1962; B. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 294–330; C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester 680–1540* (Cambridge, 1980), Chapter 14; A. Jones, 'Land and People at Leighton Buzzard in the Later Fifteenth Century', *Economic History Review* 25 (1972), pp. 18–27; A. C. Jones, 'The Customary Land Market in Fifteenth Century Bedfordshire', unpublished University of Southampton Ph.D. thesis, 1975 and T. Lomas, 'Land and People in South-East Durham in the Later Middle Ages', unpublished CNAA Ph.D. thesis, 1976.

¹⁸ R. H. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 6–7.

¹⁹ M. M. Postan, 'The Charters of the Villeins', in C. N. L. Brooke and M. M. Postan, editors, *Carte Nativorum: A Peterborough Abbey Cartulary of the Fourteenth Century*, Northamptonshire Record Society xx (Oxford, 1960), also in M. M. Postan, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (Cambridge, 1973), as Chapter 7.

for resort in the absence of any effective legal ban to a land market. Postan's main and very important contribution was to draw an analytical distinction between two opposite characteristics that this market could take on: (a) it could bring about a redistribution of land, tending to level out abnormal inequalities and to preserve a given social structure, or (b) it could have the effect of increasing inequalities associated with growing commercialization in the manner of the Leninist interpretation.

Professor Postan, as already intimated, sees the major stimulus for a traffic in land as deriving from 'certain abiding features of peasant life'. The presence of a broad distribution of family types and sizes allowed, he claims, the growth of points of surplus and shortage within the local peasant society – inequalities that could in part be resolved by resort to the land market. This market could be divided into participants who were what he terms 'natural sellers' – those deficient in labour and equipment, childless couples, widows and widowers, old men and invalids, or poor or improvident husbandmen – and 'natural buyers' – smallholders with a large number of strong helpers at home, or wealthy and energetic peasants capable of providing themselves with the necessary stock. He gathered support for his main contention from examples of customary tenants surrendering their holdings to manorial lords on account of their inability to work them, and in so doing he reflected upon the frequency with which women tenants, especially widows, figure among the leasers of land. This interpretation was subsequently questioned by Paul Hyams, who regarded Postan's analysis as a 'sociological explanation' of what he considered to be an unconscious rearrangement of holdings quite distinct from another source of redistribution operating within the land exchange system.²⁰ He states that it is the 'buying and selling of land for money which ought to be called a land market. People are born, marry and die in all societies, and in most, these events are accompanied by some redistribution of land.'²¹ Although not always easy to interpret in his presentation, Hyams goes on to suggest that given the relatively rigid spread of land resources within a peasant society and increasing demand for that land, developments are almost 'inevitably at the expense of the less protected groups'. This would appear to be quite opposite to Postan's notion and much more closely aligned with the views

²⁰ P. R. Hyams, 'The Origins of a Peasant Land Market in England', *Economic History Review* 23 (1970), p. 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

expressed by Kosminsky, who saw the wealthy getting wealthier by their land dealings with the poor.²²

It is certainly notable (and perhaps no bad thing) that in these two approaches the names of Chayanov and Lenin are never directly employed. But their differing views can be quite easily situated within that debate. Early Populists certainly believed the inequality of farm size and wealth was primarily the product of demographic forces with different families in a randomly chosen cluster of farms being at different stages of growth and decay and as a consequence possessing differing family sizes.²³ Likewise, as families grow and decline their farms also will simultaneously grow and decline. In the Russian case the mechanism ensuring the adjustment of complementary factor supplies as family labour supplies and consumer needs expand and contract may often have been the repartition of communal land. Chayanov himself was certainly aware that in agrarian regimes less flexible than that of the repartitional commune the influence of the biological factor of family development on size of land for use would not stand out so prominently. However, he did argue that the correlation of land for use with family size and composition could be achieved 'with still greater success by short term leases of land' and that in societies with private property, sale and purchase of land could fulfil the same function.²⁴

For these reasons, Macfarlane's attempt to define peasant societies as those which among other things do not participate in land markets represents a mis-specification.²⁵ What Chayanov was saying, however, implied that land transactions were being undertaken in order to meet family production requirements as consumption levels altered in the course of the development cycle. Furthermore, the activities of Chayanov's 'family labour farm' were not necessarily to be confined to agriculture, particularly at times when the family's consumption needs were greatest. By-employments in 'crafts and trades' were a crucial element making for flexibility in the system. Under all these various circumstances family size could still be

²² E. A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century*, edited by R. H. Hilton (Oxford, 1956).

²³ On this debate, see T. Shanin, *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society, Russia 1910–1925* (Oxford, 1972).

²⁴ Chayanov, *Theory of Peasant Economy*, p. 68.

²⁵ A number of commentators have noted that Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family Property and Social Transition* (Oxford, 1978), defined a peasantry with strong similarities to the ideas of Chayanov. See Gattrell, 'Historians and Peasants' p. 45 and P. Worsley, 'Village Economies', in R. Samuel, editor, *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981), pp. 80–5.

supposed to explain the variation in farm size and total family income.²⁶

It is, however, certainly a curious circumstance that by-employments in crafts and trades are energetically pursued without any attempt to sell wage labour for agricultural operations. But in this area Chayanov held firm, for he believed that in this he had solved the theoretical puzzle of peasant behaviour; the true family labour farm did not contract wage payments with its own members. Indeed, this is tantamount to claiming that in the peasant farm household labour presents itself as an overhead rather than as a variable cost. Naturally, all this stems from assuming the indivisible integrity of the family labour farm as a consumption and labour unit and can be adopted as highly plausible where either there are no competing alternative outlets for its labour or, where those alternatives exist, they are either physically or 'culturally' remote.

We have now specified three behavioural aspects of the peasant family labour farm that ought to distinguish a rural society interpretable within the framework of the Chayanov model; in the absence of something akin to periodic redistribution of land (i.e. the repartitional commune), land would be acquired by lease or purchase or perhaps grant and gift by the young but small and growing families and let, sold or given by the old and shrinking households; we might expect by-employments to be the preserve of those with smallholdings or, to sustain the Chayanovian theory in its purest form, to be practised by those with small but growing families who found their landholdings inadequate to make them self-sufficient; finally, non-family labour would be of minimal consequence, indeed almost non-existent.

On the first of these characteristics we have already referred to Postan's views, although we have not assessed the evidence upon which they were based. Cases of widows and widowers unable to cultivate their holdings because of their senility or poverty and of individuals seen to have engaged in persistent selling were taken by him from manorial court rolls. Smallholders and men of humble rank were argued to have predominated among the buyers or lessees of land, although their status was often inferred from surname evidence.²⁷ It was also argued that the buyers and lessees of land were rarely seen to have been substantial enough to figure among the men who served regularly on presentment juries or inquests or acted regularly in the manor courts as pledges. This essay, both wide-ranging and stimulating, was not buttressed by detailed empirical

²⁶ Chayanov, *Theory of Peasant Economy*, pp. 71-4.

²⁷ Postan, 'The Charters of the Villeins', pp. xxxv-xxxvi.