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the Balkans (16th – 20th Centuries)

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Gender and Property among the Bulgarian Catholics in the Plovdiv Region during the First Half of the 20th Century

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Introduction

This paper presents partial results from the research still in progress devoted to gender relations based on property among the Bulgarian Catholics of the villages General Nikolaevo and Sekirovo. It focuses on the following problems: the legal regulation of the male and female right to property according to common, civil and church law; the dynamics of the relationship between norm and practice; gender patterns of ownership – qualitative and quantitative parameters of male and female property; forms and ways of acquiring property, such as inheritance, dowries, and sale/trade; power hierarchies – male strategies versus female tactics in the field of property and their reciprocal conversion (according to de Certeau's concept on strategies and tactics).

The territorial center of the research, focused on the villages General Nikolaevo and Sekirovo,¹ was chosen due to the fact that, for the period in question, the two localities represented the largest catholic settlements in the region, being ethnically and religiously homogeneous, which suggests the minimum

and indirect influence of other ethnic or religious groups on local lifestyle. The period chosen for the research is a period of transformation during which modernity, interacting with tradition in a specific way, was striving to assert itself as a basic principle of Bulgarian society.²

The sources used in the study incorporate census registers, property tax registers, household registers, various documents from the Catholic Church, and ethnographic field data collected by the author. The methodology employed combines various quantitative and qualitative methods: the aggregate method, the method of the representative data extract, the P. Laslett analysis methods for family structures, the gatekeeper and snowball methods, structured, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, and the biographical and comparative methods.

Based on Certeau's definitions of the analytical categories of strategy and tactics, in the present study I understand by strategies actions generated and controlled by a given place belonging to the subject of power and will. This place makes it possible to calculate the balance of power, capitalize on victories, prepare for future expansions and achieve a measure of independence from the shifting circumstances. By tactics I understand deliberate actions determined by the lack of a place of one's own: they always occur on someone else's territory, in a place imposed on them by an alien force. Tactics succeed in single strikes and tend to seize "the golden opportunity" but they do not provide a base for storing gains, increase possessions or plan retreats. While strategies rely on place, tactics operate with time.³ The strategy-tactics dichotomy can be seen as a fractal one from the perspective of the concept of fractal distinctions and self-similar social structures, as stated by A. Abbott. Broadly speaking, according to this concept each member of a binary opposition incorporates the whole binary structure and can be redefined as its antagonist. The ongoing redistribution and subdivision of the

opposition members depends on the context of the social actors. The relational character of fractal distinctions makes them generate a clear social structure that replicates a hazier larger one.⁴ Certeau also finds reason to treat the strategy-tactics dichotomy in the light of fractality, although he doesn't explicitly postulate a similar idea.⁵

Gender relations and property

The empirical material used in this research shows that in the first half of the twentieth century patriarchal ideology played a dominant part in the social life and mentality of the communities examined. Patrilocality and patrilinearity, the basic constituents of this ideology, promote the establishment of land, house and name as distinctive private places where a whole range of male domination strategies take shape and operate. The priority given to land in this list of private places allowing the development of the man as an agent of will and power is a natural result of the priority of agriculture in an environment of local communities suffering financial shortages.

As a starting point for the analysis of the position of gender relations in the sphere of private property we can take the problem of the means of acquiring land ownership. The statistical side of the problem is provided by the data from the property tax registers of the two villages for the year 1929. For General Nikolaevo, the observations were made on the basis of data extracts for 100 men and 100 women. These do not claim to be representative, but aim instead to give a general outline of the basic features of the problems under investigation. Ninety of the 100 men in the data extract from General Nikolaevo possess land with a specified means of acquisition.⁶ For 64 men (71.1 % of the 90) inheritance functions as a mode of gaining such property, either on its own or in combination

with other methods like purchasing, trading, donation and a dowry. In 33 of the property accounts, inheritance is recorded as the only means of land acquisition. Purchasing is the other basic means of gaining land, as used by 53 men (58.9% of 90). For 17 of the men this is the only means, while the rest combine this method with inheritance, trading, donation or a dowry.

As for the women, 92 of the 100 women in the data extract from General Nikolaevo possess land property with a specified mode of acquisition.⁷ For 80 of them (87% of the 92) inheritance is either the only way of gaining land or is combined with purchasing, bartering or donation. In 68 of 80 cases, property has been acquired only by means of inheritance. In the property accounts of 15 women (16.3% of the 92) purchasing is recorded as one of the ways of gaining land, and the only means in 9 of the cases.

The quantitative parameters given clearly point to inheritance as the chief mode of land property acquisition used by both sexes. Moreover, the bartering registered are also likely to have involved inherited as well as purchased land. The parameters also clearly show the greater reliance of women's property acquisition on inheritance, which suggests a greater dependence on the family circle for women in property matters, since inheritance is a transfer of property between relatives. Men are comparatively more active participants in the property market.

Without questioning the precision of the juxtaposition, which is hardly possible because of the different sizes of the data extracts, it can be concluded that the case of the Sekirovo women is very similar to that of those from General Nikolaevo, only with an even stronger emphasis on inheritance in Sekirovo. Nineteen out of 25 women registered in the extant segment of Sekirovo's register are in possession of property.⁸ For eighteen of them (94.3% of 19 women) inheritance is among the means of land acquisition, either in separation (in 12 cases) or in various

combinations with purchasing and trading. In 5 of the property accounts (26.3% of the accounts for 19 women) purchasing is recorded in combination with inheritance and bartering.

Examining the ethnographic field material collected helps us break down the stereotype and stagnation of the statistical account and face the complex puzzle of family relationships and land inheritance. The changeability of these relationships provokes the social agents to resort to various practices that reflect the struggle of the agents to preserve and redistribute power resources using inheritance according to the circumstances, either as an instrument or a pledge.

During the period in question, the common standard applied in the two villages embodies the egalitarian principle that guides the traditional system of inheritance and stipulates the allotment of equal shares in the father's property to all his sons. The property inherited by the sons is called "bashtina" (i.e. coming from/belonging to the father; patrimony). As a rule, the sons get their shares of the inheritance with the division of the multiple-family household (if the classification argued by P. Laslett is used).⁹ Thus, the moment of transfer of property rights from the older to the younger generation depends neither on the death of the father nor the marriage of the male heirs, and only on the specific characteristics of the family life cycle and the duration of its stage of complexity, in particular. Traditionally, the sons' nuclear families leave home and acquire land after each has married, has been provided with enough draught animals and farm equipment, and has had his own house built through the joint efforts of the entire family. Within their development cycle, the family units pass through the stages of extension (i.e. they turn into an extended-family household) and complexity (when they become a multiple-family household). The varying duration and arrangement of the complexity stage reflects the changes of a whole system of

demographic, economic and socio-cultural factors. The ethnographic data displays a tendency for rich and middle-class families with more property to prolong the complexity stage. This is closely connected with the fact that each available worker is of particular importance in developing farming. Farmhands are seldom hired, except by the richer families at the time of harvesting, threshing or for emergencies. For example, during the First World War, F. and P.A., a mother and daughter from Sekirovo, hired a farmhand from Romania to help them while the head of the family was on the front. Between the 1920s and 1940s, the family of M.K. made a more systematic use of hired farmhands. This was one of the richest families in General Nikolaevo but they had only one son and three daughters, one of whom became a nun. When land resources are not sufficient to provide for a larger community, the sons quite often leave the family, either one by one, depending on when they marry, or immediately after the marriage of the last one. At the time of distribution of property, the father chooses a small part of the property for himself and his wife and continues living in his old house, usually with the family of his youngest son. After the death of the two parents, the son inherits the house and the father's share of the property.

The delineation of the specific characteristics of the family types that build up the property relations between generations and genders can be expanded using an overview of the data on the size and structure of the households, as found in the census registers and household registers mentioned above. By matching the data in the census registers on the population figures in the two villages for the years 1893, 1900, 1905, and 1920 we see that the average size of the family unit varies between 5.4 and 5.8 people in General Nikolaevo and between 6.2 and 6.6 people in Sekirovo. On the whole, the curve for population changes is unstable, though not too markedly.

Analysis of the household registers deals with representative data extracts produced by means of lottery selection.¹⁰ These include 76 and 81 households in General Nikolaevo for the years 1935 and 1946 respectively, and 87 households from Sekirovo for 1946. The average size of a household in the General Nikolaevo data extract was 5.5 people in 1935, with a variation of 1.4 people,¹¹ and 5.1 people in 1946, with a variation of 1.8. The average size of a household in Sekirovo data extract for 1946 was 5.5 people with a variation of about 2 people. It is beyond doubt that the household register data and the methods used to process them give a more accurate idea of average household size, because, broadly speaking, they show the correspondence between the number of households and their size. Without aiming for maximum precision in the comparison of the qualitative and quantitative parameters taken from the census and household registers, we can observe a lack of dramatic change in the parameter for family type already discussed in both villages between the end of the 19th and the middle of the 20th century. During the stated period, the average size of a household in Sekirovo remained a little above that characteristic of General Nikolaevo.

The snapshot data on the structure of households, presented in the household registers (see Table 1), suggests that simple-family households were the most prevalent forms in the two villages during the two years in question, followed by the multiple-family and extended-family households. In General Nikolaevo, in 1935, and in Sekirovo, the fourth most popular type is the no-family household. Solitaries were recorded only in General Nikolaevo in 1946. The noticeable growth in the percentage of simple-family households in General Nikolaevo between 1935 and 1946 at the expense of a reduction in the percentage of extended-family and multiple-family households can be interpreted as indirect proof of the transformations that

have occurred in the family life cycle. They include a shortening of the stages of extension and complexity and a tendency for young couples and their children to set up their own households earlier. The markedly greater resemblance between the picture of widely-spread households of the above type in Sekirovo in 1946 and that of General Nikolaevo in 1935 suggests that the transformation process in the family life cycle in the first village was a little behind the times and slower to develop. Respondents from both General Nikolaevo and Sekirovo admit that in Sekirovo, unlike General Nikolaevo, until the middle of the 20th century and even later, families were larger, fathers less prompt in dividing the property between their married sons, and the practice of the sons' leaving the home one by one depending on when they marry less frequent. This peculiarity in the structuring of family types in Sekirovo is another argument used by General Nikolaevo's residents to describe the backwardness of their neighbors. Given the aforementioned correspondence between the capacity of land resources belonging to a family unit and the size and structure of this family unit, we can assume that the high rate of arable land reclamation in General Nikolaevo, which led to land shortages, played a crucial role in the faster disintegration of the extended-family and multiple family households in this village. Sekirovo did not encounter a similar problem because its residents were able to move to the neighboring Catholic village of Parchevich, founded after the Liberation mainly by Sekirovo newcomers, where there were unoccupied estates. It is probably due to land shortage that brickyards ("keranite") in General Nikolaevo are greater in number and are situated in neighborhoods inhabited by people with little or no property. The information in the property tax registers of General Nikolaevo from 1911 and 1929 also attests to the expanding process of land property parcellation. The earlier register contains a record of 586 property accounts and the later one 1543, i.e.

during the 18-year period the number of landowners increased almost three-fold. The data extract of 100 men in General Nikolaevo shows that in 1911 one person owned an average of 620 acres of land, while using the same-sized extract for 1929 this had fallen to 342 acres. The analogically-sized data extracts for women show that in 1911 a female owner had an average of 252 acres of land, but this fell to 168 acres by 1929.

While for the sons the moment they received their due share of the legacy was a direct function of the features of the family life cycle, daughters obtained their share of legacy at the time of their marriage. According to the traditional norm in both villages during the time period studied, the family would assemble a trousseau for the girl's marriage and give a dowry. This was a direct dowry in which property was passed from the parents to the daughter at her marriage representing her share of her father's legacy.¹²

The trousseau consisted of clothes and linen, the making of which, by hand, the maids were actively involved in. Since the early 1920s, maids began contributing to the assembly of the trousseau with the money they earned as part-time hired workers on the rich Orthodox landowners' farms or in the brick workshops of the neighboring Orthodox and Catholic villages.

The nature of the dowry is not regulated by a specific traditional convention but is a matter of decision conditioned by circumstance. A common component of the dowry is a certain amount personal property that, according to the generalized ethnographic data on General Nikolaevo, consisted of household utensils, a hen and a chicken, a young goat, a lamb, a sheep, a goat, or a cow, in a combination decided on by the parents, in particular the father. In Sekirovo, this personal property was restricted to clothing and furnishings, the wealthier families adding an animal – a young goat, a lamb, a sheep, a goat, a heifer. Most respondents in General Nikolaevo related the

inclusion of land in the dowry not only to the father's personal decision but also to the family's property status. They said: "Those who want, those who have enough, will give", "enough" here meaning enough to provide for the male heirs. When the means existed, however, a denial to give (at least 10 or 20 acres) was strongly disapproved of by fellow villagers. Thus, leaving a legacy of property becomes an indicator of the affluence and social prestige of the family unit and helps increase its symbolic capital. The narratives from Sekirovo create the impression of a more stable interiorization of the view that property should be distributed only among the sons. In both villages, the girls who were not excluded from the inheritance circle always received considerably smaller shares than the boys. They were usually given a field (from 10-20 to 30-40 acres, though possibly more if belonging to a more affluent family), to which wealthier families added a meadow, a vineyard, or a forest. In Sekirovo, the families usually restricted themselves to a field.

The ignoring of daughters as land heirs was justified by the idea that they are "strangers at home", as with their marriage, which anyway happened at an early age: they become members of another collective body where they realized their labor and reproductive potential.

The dowry is called "miraz" or "arizmo". According to some respondents, personal property is more frequently called "arizmo", although the term "miraz" is sometimes used also. The dowry is announced publically during the wedding party. In compliance with current conventions, the announcement was made by the bride's father. Quite often, however, when the dowry included land, it was the mother who gave the "arizmo" (i.e. the personal property), and the father who gave the "miraz" (i.e. the real property).

The mother may also assume the role of a legator of property (in the presence of a living father), but this only occurred rather

sporadically. The opinions in the two villages are contradictory: in one it is common for the mother's property to be given only to the daughters, while in the other it is to be shared between children of both sexes. Individual respondents stated that the mother's land was distributed only among the sons. The share of the mother's property inherited by the girls (announcement of which was also made at the wedding) was again called "miraz" as well as "materina" (i.e. coming from/belonging to the mother), a term found also in the property tax registers.

Among the exceptions we find examples of the father-in-law giving real property to the bride, a form of indirect dowry where the property is given by the groom's kin directly to the bride.¹³ This was the case with the mother of A. P. (born in 1907) from General Nikolaevo, who got married at the end of the 19th century and received 20 acres of fields from her father-in-law at her wedding. A.'s mother gave A. the same field at her wedding (in 1924), and her father added another field of 50 acres to the dowry. Such instances of both parents granting property to the daughter, however, were not common in the villages we investigated. A.'s parents were wealthy, and had only one son (and six daughters), which allowed them to make this demonstration of social prestige in front of the similarly wealthy family of A.'s husband to which they were to be allied by marriage.

If the daughter receives no property when entering into matrimony, her father, if willing, may assign a small share of the estate to her when dividing it, or her brothers may give her a share in it after the father's death if she has kept up a good relationship with them.

The narratives from both villages facilitate a germination of this tendency for the "ladder-like" distribution of legacy – from fathers to sons, and subsequently to daughters – to be dated roughly to the period between the early 1920s and the

1930s. A more active development of this tendency is observed in General Nikolaevo. The initiative to distribute paternal property most often comes from the brothers. For instance, the brothers of A. T. (born in 1911) from General Nikolaevo gave the daughter 120 acres of their father's property; while the brother of A. T. (born in 1932) gathered the three sisters and offered each 50 acres of their father's fields, making it clear that if they wanted more they would no longer be "close to each other". The respondents from Sekirovo, including quite a lot of women, often alluded to the idea that it was right for the sisters to refuse the legacy they were entitled to in favor of their brothers, thereby expressing their respect for them. This view calls to mind the alchemy of symbolic violence discussed by Bourdieu,¹⁴ which in this case helps in the dissimulation of power tensions in the gender relationships by means of an emotionally tinged attachment, thus enabling their functioning unhampered. The reaction of some sisters against the aforementioned traditional view also appears in the form of symbolic metamorphosis. For example, the sisters of M.I.'s father (born in 1930) from Sekirovo asked their brother in the late 1940s to give them half an acre each of "bashtinia" as a keepsake from their father.

According to the general concept, a daughter in both villages who has received land as dowry cannot take part in the distribution of her father's or mother's property. One of the rare exceptions to this rule, confirmed by the ethnographic data, is the case of A. P. from General Nikolaevo. When A.'s father died in 1931, her brother summoned his six sisters so that all of them could decide on the division of property. He allotted 1.2 acres of land to each of them, a very small share to his mother, who was living with him in her late husband's house, and equal shares of the larger part of the father's property to himself and his aunt on his father's side, who was a village

nun and lived in the same house. A.'s life story makes it clear that the brother was unwilling to strain his relations with his sisters and especially with A., whose husband and in-laws were leading figures in the village and even had a certain amount of contact with Plovdiv's aristocracy. The respondent also pointed out that up until the wars – the Balkan War, the War between the Allies, and the First World War (around 1919) – “the woman was still under the Ottoman yoke”. With the return of the men from the front, women's conditions changed. According to A., “people became more intelligent and started treating women in a different way”. Actually, A.'s narrative is the only one of this kind in which we encounter an explicit critical appraisal of the wars as a turning point indicative of the changes in various spheres in the life of the local community.

By raising the question of the problem of the innovations transforming the traditional practices of inheritance by female children, we come to the problem of the official legal regulation of gender property relations. The inheritance law, which came into force in 1890, granted equal rights of inheritance to children of both sexes. The 1906 amendment to the law, however, stipulated that sons would inherit shares of land property and agricultural movable property of twice size of that inherited by daughters. (*The Official Gazette*, No 29, Feb. 7, 1906). The ethnographic material collected proves convincingly that these laws were implemented in the area examined. Consequently, there is little reason to discuss their influence on the liberalization of said traditional practices that allowed daughters to participate more actively in inheritance. Due to various economic and socio-cultural factors, mainly the low level of literacy and education in the communities studied, the majority of the population remained fairly ignorant of the existence of the inheritance law. Moreover, the chance of women (even where assisted by their husbands' families) going to court and

demanding their rights of inheritance was rather slim since they did not have the money to cover the expenses. Seeing the brother-sister relationship more as an emotional attachment and duty than as a gender inequality further prevented them from going to court. As a matter of fact, in the property tax registers examined here, only one of the property accounts in the General Nikolaevo register from 1929 (p.1690) shows property that was acquired through the courts. This transfer, however, was not between relatives.

The influence of the inheritance law on local practices was mostly indirect, which makes it difficult to detect. Some of the narratives from General Nikolaevo suggest the imitation of external models of behavior as a possible way in which it affected the village. Of course, these were adjusted to the situation to which they were applied. The marked tendency in General Nikolaevo for women to play a more active role in the distribution of the father's property can also be seen as a result of the internal logic of socio-economic development. With the ever increasing population and high rate of land reclamation in a given settlement combined with money shortages which depressed the land market, the more active distribution of property between the members of this settlement grew to great importance. The transfer of property in marital transactions appears to have been one of the forms of this increased activity. With men receiving increasingly smaller shares of their father's property, women's property started playing a more important role in the expansion of the family estate. The more active change of ownership raised the potential of using new and more effective methods for managing and dealing with property. The wife's heritage had a specific catalyst effect on the centrifugal forces acting within the multiple-family household, which were usually personified by the younger generations of sons. The ethnographic data provides evidence of cases in which the property inherited by women –

cornfields and yards, providing newly weds with a relatively high level of independence – enabled the sons to be more insistent when asking their fathers for an earlier separation of the nuclear families.

Of course, the hypothesis of grounding said transformations in the traditional inheritance practices upon the effect of factors internal to local development rather than on external influences could change after further study of this problem. For the time being, however, it is beyond doubt that the data presented so far challenge the thesis of the unilateral linkage of the appearance of the dowry in Bulgarian rural environment to the modernization influences from Western Europe as refracted through the prism of the laws adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament after the Liberation.¹⁵ I will add only that a manuscript¹⁶ dating to the period of 1818-1870, drawn up by a parish clergymen from General Nikolaevo and containing information on various forms of land transfer between local people (inheritance, purchase and sale, donation, mortgage, etc.) as well the granting of money loans, contains various cases relating to the participation of women in property transactions and the granting of interest-bearing loans (including those granted to close relatives, father, brothers), as well as the distribution of heritage. I will confine myself to one example only: on 8 August 1848, P. L. stated that he would leave 32 acres of land to his daughter L., and 96 acres to his sons. Whenever the latter were away, their real property was to be managed by the daughter.

The empirical material used in this study contains no clues as to any direct influence of the church over the property aspect of gender relations in said environment during the period under consideration. According to Father Y. P., a parish clergyman in Sekirovo, prior to the Liberation there existed parochial books of betrothal in which the clergyman entered the names of the

betrothed and the property each of them had to bring to the new family. Witnesses were also present – relatives, but very not close ones in order to keep impartiality. Later on, if one of the parties failed to keep its betrothal promises, the marriage was declared invalid. During the war between Russia and Turkey, these books were burnt and never renewed. Father Y. P. grounds the refusal of the church to become involved in proprietary relationships at a local level on the fact that there were frequent invalidations of marriages due to the refusal of one or both parties to keep to the property agreement of betrothal. The indirect influence of the church can be found in the strengthening of the priority position in the family held by the husband, an idea that was expressed both in Sunday sermons and in conversations held by the parish clergyman with the young boys and girls registered for a wedding.

According to the ethnographic data, the property inherited by the wife in both villages often came without its official legal sanction or was entered in the property tax registers in the name of the woman-owner immediately after its being acquired. In these cases it appeared under the property account of the husband and there was a sporadic note saying that the property had been brought on the distaff side. Thus, for instance, the property account of G. T. (pages 307-8) in the General Nikolaevo register for 1929 specified 80 acres of cornfields received as “dowry”, while the whole real property of M. M. (page 938) was marked as “given as dowry”. Members of the family and close relatives distinguished between the property brought by the wife, calling it “bride’s/mother’s cornfields” or “bride’s/mother’s property”. Besides this, most men had no title deeds, though the property tax registers provided the official guarantee of their proprietary rights.

Thus, the said registers became one of the places of discourse created by the strategies of male dominance. This

was a place from which the postulate of male priority in the ownership of family property is sanctioned, legitimized, and officially reproduced.

The problem of power in proprietary gender relations, as explicated in the property tax registers, can be approached through a comparative examination of the age at which the representatives of the two sexes appear in the above mentioned documents. The following indicators have been used for the age characteristics of the data extracts of 100 men and 100 women from General Nikolaevo for the years 1911 and 1929: the average age of registered owners (X), the median (Me) indicating the age and positioned in the centre of the data extract, and the mode (Mo) showing the most frequently encountered age within the data extract. For the men from General Nikolaevo, in 1911 the average age was 47.7, the Me was 48, and the Mo was 56, while in 1929 the average age was 41.2, the Me 36.5, and the Mo 29. The dependencies between these indicators show that the distribution of age within the data extract for 1911 has left-side asymmetry ($X < Me < Mo$), meaning that the largest number of ages are grouped between the average age of 47.7 and the maximum age of 76. The respective distribution of the 1929 data extract is characterized by right-side asymmetry ($X > Me > Mo$), which shows that the largest group of ages range between the minimum registered age of 20 and the average age of 41.2. The interpretation of the difference between the age characteristics of men-owners for the two years in question fits into the context of the tendency discussed above: over the course of time, the phase of complexity in the family life cycle shortens and sons separate from their fathers earlier and acquire property rights earlier. The average age of women in the 1911 data extract for General Nikolaevo was 45.4, the Me was 45, while the Mo was 50 and 60 years of age; the age distribution has left-side asymmetry

(strongly expressed), which suggests an accumulation between the average age and the maximum registered age of 75. As for the women in the 1929 data extract, the average age was 46.7, the Me was 47, while the Mo was 55. The largest group of ages within this distribution, which is also characterized by left-side asymmetry, are grouped between the average age and the maximum registered age of 81. Comparison between the age characteristics of men and women in the four data extracts evidences a particularity which remains stable over time: most women appear on the registers as owners at more advanced ages when compared with men. Diagrams 1, 2, 3 and 4 provide a more detailed visual notion of the distribution of ages and the specificity of the age-gender-amount of land owned relationship for said data extracts for the two years. It is clear that both in 1911 and 1929, unlike men, women showed greater age diversity below 30, with the ages within the said range being more often represented in 1911. Similarly, in 1929, women showed a certain abatement of the lower age threshold. As far as the age-gender-amount of land owned relationship is concerned, the axes of differentiation reflect the social stratification rather than the age and gender statuses. However, in both years, the maximum amount of property owned by women is considerably below that owned by men.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 represent the types and amount of roofed and roofless real property owned by men and women constituting the said samples from General Nikolaevo and Sekirovo for 1929. According to the land registers, roofless real property includes cornfields, meadows, vineyards, forests, and hemp fields, while roofed real property includes houses as well as agricultural, craftsman's and trade buildings, and vacant yards. Without going into detail on the data presented in the tables, I will point out that as far as General Nikolaevo is concerned, where the comparison is adequate due to the similar scope of the data

extracts, the prevailing position of men is evident with respect to both the type and the amount of property owned.

The analysis performed so far clearly shows how, regardless of the male dominance in the field of ownership, it is impossible for the men/male-women/female dichotomy to be considered within the paradigm order of the presence-absence opposition in proprietary rights. Within their individual life cycle, along with the acquisition of different statuses, the men and women turn out to have different positions with respect to ownership and non-ownership of property, especially land, which is of the utmost importance in the local economies under consideration. The hierarchy of social statuses for both genders implies certain dynamics along the axis of more obligations/less rights – less obligations/more rights, and power, respectively. In the given communities, the woman is more valuable as a wife than a daughter, because it is in the family of her husband that she realizes her labor and reproductive potential. In her parents' home she has many obligations and only a few rights – the right to property ownership not being one of them. The acquisition of real property as a dowry broadens her often merely hypothetical prospects of developing various strategies related to the actions performed with the real property – its sale, its transfer in heritage, etc. – which are both a consequence of and a prerequisite for her relative independence and the greater power she enjoys within the family. These situations explicate the conversion of female-male, inasmuch as the traditional concept establishes property as being an attributive characteristic of man. These strategies are more often realized in the nuclear families and the extended-family households, or the multiple-family households if the woman is the husband's mother, i.e. the wife of the householder. As, for instance, in the cases of M. K. (born in 1888, appearing on the property tax register of 1929) and P.

C. (born in 1885, appearing on the property tax registers of 1911 and 1929) from General Nikolaevo and T. G. (married in 1924) from Sekirovo. Whenever the woman is in the position of a daughter-in-law in a multiple-family household and/or her real property has been registered in the name of her husband, the probability that she will act strategically is essentially negligible. Despite the fact that according to the traditional view the man may not perform actions with the property of his wife without her consent, according to the respondents there existed no real sanction that might deter them from doing so. Thus, the wife can do nothing other than apply various tactics in order to prevent her husband's abuse of her own property. The culmination of the metamorphosis of women's tactics and strategy is achieved in situations where the husband's mother in a multiple-family household becomes a widow. At this time, the latter totally assumes the functions of her late husband and becomes the owner of the family property (including on an official level) and disposes of it. Of course, this does not constitute a rule and is not realized in all such situations. After the death of the head of the family, a number of factors can contribute either to the disintegration of the family community or to its eldest son becoming the head of the family.

An example par excellence of the inversion of the paradigm dichotomies of male-female and strategy-tactics is the institution of village nuns, which was common to both villages.¹⁷ Unlike monastic nuns, village nuns do not have a coenobitic lifestyle but instead reside at their parents' home, take informal oral vows of celibacy, and perform different duties connected with the church and the religious practices of the local communities. In well-to-do families nuns received a share of the heritage equal to that of their brothers, sometimes even larger. This provides them with the opportunity to become head of a family in certain cases, although this is infrequent. The real property

of the nuns was inherited by the relatives they lived with – most often this was the family of one of their brothers. The nun's ownership of land results in a specific circular transfer of ownership – from father to daughter and then to the brother – and ultimately the property does not move out of the circle of close relatives and contributes to the reproduction of patrilocality and patrilinearity.

The institution of sons-in-law residing in their wife's house and the institution of the will to transfer inheritance rights to the daughter to the detriment of the son/sons represent the other proper places that postulate the development of women's strategies with regard to property and force men to act in a tactical way.

Besides the above mentioned cases, men turn out to be in the weaker position of requiring "tactical blows" in order to benefit from those stronger than them in the extended-family household and the multiple-family household, where, even after getting married, they have to submit to the authority of the father and/or mother.

The dynamics of the man/male-woman/female, strategy-tactics relationship do not in any way exhaust the variety of configurations in which their inversion can be found. Within the framework of extended-family households, and especially multiple-family households, complex networks of relationships between relatives are built around the subject of ownership. The power aspect of these relationships undergoes various changes, reflecting the variety of life situations. The construction of gender identities is accomplished on the grounds of the conjunction of male and female characteristics, and on their dynamic opposition and mutual transfusion.

SUPPLEMENT

Table 1. Structure of households

Household Category	Gen. Nikolaevo 1935 r.		Gen. Nikolaevo 1946 r.		Sekirovo 1946 r.	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1 (a total number)	0	0	4	4.9	0	0
1a	0		1		0	
1б	0		3		0	
2 (a total number)	1	1.3	1	1.2	3	3.4
2a	1		0		0	
2б	0		1		0	
2в	0		0		3	
3 (a total number)	37	48.7	47	58.1	42	48.3
3a	3		5		2	
3б	30		42		36	
3в	2		0		1	
3г	2		0		3	
4 (a total number)	10	13.2	8	9.9	10	11.5
4a	7		6		6	
4б	1		1		0	
4в	2		1		3	
4г	0		0		1	
5 (a total number)	28	36.8	21	25.9	32	36.8
5a	1		1		2	
5б	23		18		26	
5б*	21		13		19	
5б**	2		5		6	
5б***	0		0		1	
5в	0		0		2	
5г	1		0		0	
5д	3		2		2	
6 (a total number)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	76	100	81	100	87	100

*Women and Family: Status, Roles and Property /
Femmes et famille : statut, rôle et propriété*

Legend: Structure of households: categories and classes

Categories	Classes
1. Solitaries	1a. Widowed 1б. Single or of unknown marital status
2. No family	2a. Coresident siblings 2б. Coresident relatives of other kinds 2в. Persons not evidently related
3. Simple family households	3a. Married couples alone 3б. Married couples with child(ren) 3в. Widowers with child(ren) 3г. Widows with child(ren)
4. Extended family households	4a. Extended upwards 4б. Extended downwards 4в. Extended laterally 4г. Combinations of 4a-4c
5. Multiple family households	5a. Secondary unit(s) up 5б. Secondary unit(s) down 5б*. With one secondary unit down 5б**. With two secondary units down 5б***. With three secondary units down 5в. With lateral units 5г. Frerches 5д. Other multiple families
6. Indeterminate	

Sources: Household registers for General Nikolaevo, 1935, 1946
Household register for Sekirovo, 1946
All the household registers are from the Municipal Archive in Rakovski.

Table 2. Property owned by men in General Nikolaev, 1929

		Roofed property						Roofless property																				
		Cornfields	Meadows	Vineyards	Forests	Hemp fields	Houses	Agricultural buildings	Craft and trade buildings	Not-built up yards																		
		acres	IV	V	acres	IV	V	acres	IV	V	acres	IV	V															
I		0-50	15	16.1	0-5	4	7.4	0-5	2	10	0-10	2	8.7	0-5	5	83.3	0-10	1	12.5	0-10	4	5.8	0-10	1	25	0-200	-	
		50-	6	6.5	5-10	13	24.1	5-10	6	30	10-20	6	26.1	5-10	-	10-20	8	10	10-20	13	18.8	10-20	2	50	200-	8	9.9	
		100-	19	20.4	10-20	14	25.9	10-20	9	45	20-30	4	17.4	10-20	-	20-30	5	6.3	20-30	10	14.5	20-30	1	25	400-	14	17.3	
		200-	9	9.7	20-30	9	16.7	20-30	2	10	30-50	5	21.7	20-30	1	16.7	30-40	9	11.3	30-40	12	17.4	30-40	-	600	600-	7	8.6
		300-	12	12.9	30-40	7	13	30-40	-	-	50-	5	21.7	30-40	-	40-50	32	40	40-50	6	8.7	40-50	-	1000	800-	18	22.2	
		400-	9	9.7	40-50	3	5.5	40-50	1	5	100-	1	4.3	40-50	-	50-60	10	12.5	50-	22	31.9	50-	50-	1000-	50-	21	25.9	
		500-	11	11.8	50-60	2	3.7	50-60	-	-	200-	-	-	50-60	-	60-70	3	3.8	100-	2	2.9	100-	100-	1500-	100-	9	11.1	
		600-	12	12.9	up	2	3.7	over	-	-	300-	-	-	over	-	over	12	15	over	-	-	over	over	2000-	over	4	4.9	
		over	600	min.	0.4	min.	0.3	min.	0.6	min.	0.1	min.	0.1	min.	9	min.	9	min.	9	min.	9	min.	10	min.	204	min.	204	
II		max.	115.6	max.	10.1	max.	5	max.	10.5	max.	2.8	max.	100	max.	100	max.	100	max.	22	max.	22	max.	24	max.	3000	max.	3000	
III		93	54	20	23	6	80*	69	4	81**																		

Source: 1929 Property tax register for General Nikolaevo, Municipal Archive in Rakovski.

Notes: * One of the owners has two houses; the table gives the total area of both buildings.

** Three of the owners have two not-built up yards each; the table gives the total area of both yards owned by each man.

Table 3. Property owned by women in General Nikolaev, 1929

	Roofed property					Roofless property				
	Cornfields	Meadows	Vineyards	Forests	Hemp fields	Houses	Agricultural buildings	Craft and trade buildings	Not-built up yards	
I	acres IV 20	acres IV 5	acres IV 5	acres IV 1	acres IV 2	acres IV 4	sqm IV 2	sqm IV 2	sqm IV 3	
	0-5	0-5	0-5	0-10	0-5	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-200	
	20.1	17.9	17.9	9.1	9.1	9.1	66.7	11.1	0-200	
	20	5	5	1	2	2	2	2	3	
	50-100	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10	5-10	10-20	10-20	4	
	232	32.1	32.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	38.9	38.9	16.7	
	22	9	9	1	1	1	7	7	4	
	100-200	10-20	10-20	20-30	10-20	20-30	20-30	20-30	400-600	
	27	28.4	28.4	4	4	4	6	6	3	
	200	17.9	17.9	22.2	10-20	33.3	17.1	20-30	600	
	200-300	20-30	20-30	30-50	20-30	30-40	11.4	30-40	2	
	16	16.8	16.8	1	1	1	4	4	8.3	
	300-400	30-40	30-40	50-100	30-40	40-50	22.9	40-50	800-1000	
	5	5.3	5.3	2	2	2	8	8	3	
	2	7.1	7.1	18.2	30-40	30-40	40-50	40-50	12.5	
	2	2.1	2.1	1	1	1	3	3	3	
	400-500	40-50	40-50	40-50	40-50	50-60	8.6	11.1	1000-1500	
	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	
	500-600	50-60	50-60	200-300	50-60	60-70	5.7	11.1	1500-2000	
	2	2.1	2.1	3	3	3	2	2	5	
	over 600	over 60	over 60	over 300	over 60	over 70	over 200	over 200	20.8	
	1	1.1	1.1	1	1	1	4	4	1	
	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.3	16	16	4.2	
II	min. 60.2	min. 6.2	min. 6.2	min. 33.3	min. 2	min. 72	min. 145	min. 210	max. 3562	
III	95	28	28	11	3	35*	20**	4	24***	

Source: 1929 Property tax register for General Nikolaevo, Municipal Archive in Rakovski.

Notes: * There is no data on the areas of the houses owned by two women.

** There is no data on the areas of the agricultural buildings owned by two women.

*** One of the woman-owners has two not-built up yards; the table gives the total area of both yards.

Table 4. Property owned by women in Sekirovo, 1929

Roofed property						Roofless property															
I	Cornfields	Meadows	Vineyards	Forests	Hemp fields	Houses	Agricultural buildings	Craft and trade buildings	Not built up yards												
	acres	IV	V	acres	IV	V	acres	IV	V	acres	IV	V									
	0-50	4	21.1	0-5	-	-	0-5	-	-	0-10	1	11.1	0-10	-	-	0-200	2	18.2			
	50-100	4	21.1	5-10	1	25	5-10	1	50	10-20	-	-	10-20	2	22.2	10-20	-	-	200-400	-	-
	100-200	3	15.8	10-20	1	25	10-20	-	20-30	-	20-30	1	11.1	20-30	1	50	400-600	2	18.2		
	200-300	2	10.5	20-30	1	25	20-30	-	30-50	-	30-40	1	8.3	30-40	-	-	600-800	2	18.2		
	300-400	3	15.8	30-40	-	-	30-40	-	50-100	-	40-50	4	33.3	40-50	1	11.1	800-1000	-	-		
	400-500	1	5.3	40-50	-	-	40-50	-	100-200	-	50-60	-	50-100	3	33.3	50-100	1	50	1000-1500	2	18.2
	500-600	1	5.3	50-60	1	25	50-60	-	200-300	-	60-70	2	16.7	200	1	11.1	1500-2000	2	18.2		
	over 600	1	5.3	over 60	-	-	over 60	-	over 300	-	over 70	4	33.3	over 200	-	-	over 1500	1	9.1		
II	min.	1.2	min.	1	min.	0.5	min.	1	min.	-	min.	28	min.	9	min.	30	min.	63			
	max.	67.5	max.	5.7	max.	0.6	max.	1.7	max.	-	max.	84	max.	168	max.	76	max.	2450			
III	19	4	2	2	-	12*	9	2**	11												

Source: 1929 Property tax register for Sekirovo, Municipal Archive in Rakovski

Notes: * Two of woman-owners have two houses each; the table gives the total area of both buildings owned by each woman.
** One of woman-owners has two trade buildings; the table gives the total area of both buildings.

Legend to the Tables 2, 3 and 4:

I - Type of property

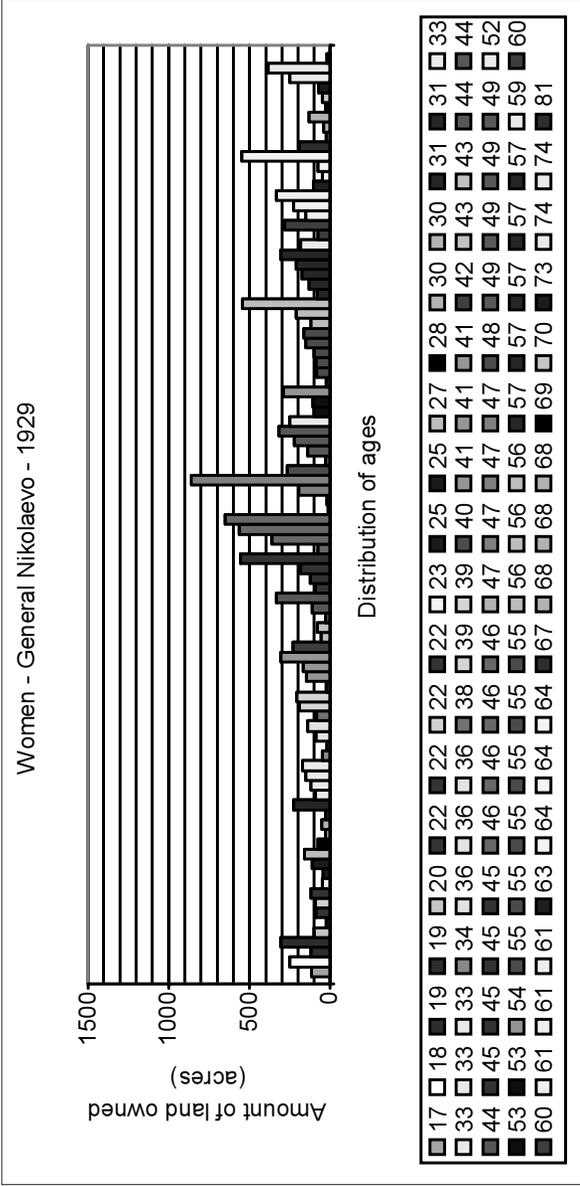
II - Minimum and maximum amount of the respective type of property owned

III - Number of men owning the respective type of property

IV - Number of men owning the stated amount of the respective type of property

V - Percentage correspondence between the number of men owning the stated amount of the respective property type and the total number of men owning this type of property

Diagram 4



Source: 1929 Property tax register for General Nikolaevo, Municipal Archive in Rakovski.

NOTES

- ¹ Between 1885 and 1945, the number of inhabitants fluctuated between 2089 and 5663 in Sekirovo and 2022 and 5478 in General Nikolaevo - *Rezultati ot prebrojavane na naselenieto v Iztochna Rumelia na 1.I.1885*. Plovdiv, 1885; *Rezultati ot prebrojavaneto na naselenieto v Severna I Juzhna Balgaria na 1.I.1888*. Okrug Plovdiv. Vol. IX. Sofia, 1888; *Rezultati ot prebrojavaneto na naselenieto v Knjazhestvo Balgaria na 1.I.1893*. Okrug Plovdiv. Vol. VIII. Sofia, 1893; *Rezultati ot prebrojavaneto na naselenieto v Knjazhestvo Balgaria na 31.XII.1900*. Okrug Plovdiv. Vol.VI. Sofia, 1903; *Rezultati ot prebrojavane na naselenieto v Tsarstvo Balgaria na 31.XII.1905*. Okrug Plovdiv. Vol. VI. Sofia, 1911; *Rezultati ot prebrojavane na naselenieto v Tsarstvo Balgaria na 31.XII.1920*. Okrug Plovdiv. Vol. IX. Sofia, 1929; *Predvaritelni rezultati ot prebrojavaneto na naselenieto na 31.XII.1946*. *Broj na naselenieto po naseleni mesta*, Sofia, 1947. Since 1966, without changing their location, these villages and village Parchevich have been making up the town of Rakovski, located 25 km northeast of Plovdiv.
- ² See for instance SANDERS, I., WHITAKER, R., "Tradition and Modernization: The Case of Bulgaria", in LUTZ, J. and EI-SHAKHS, S., ed. *Tradition and Modernity. The Role of Traditionalism in Modernization Process*. Washington, 1982, p. 147-163; BOTEV, N. "Nuptiality in the Course of Demographic Transition: The Experience of the Balkan Countries," in *Population Studies*, 44, no. 1, 1990, pp. 107-126.
- ³ De CERTEAU, M. *Izobretiavane na vsekidneviето*. LIK, Sofia, 2002, p. 41-43, 49-51, 104-106.
- ⁴ ABBOTT, A. *Chaos of Disciplines*. University Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001. Compare also the analysis of S. Gal and G. Kligman about the functioning of the fractal semiotic processes: GAL, S., KLIGMAN, G. *The Politics of Gender after Socialism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000, p. 37-62; as well as J. Kaufman's comments on A. Abbott's concept in KAUFMAN, J. "Endogenous Explanation in the Sociology of Culture," in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30/1, 2004, pp. 349-351.
- ⁵ De CERTEAU, M. *Op. cit.*, p. 53, 66, 106, 165-167.
- ⁶ Seven of these one hundred men have no property and three of them have property with unspecified means of acquisition.
- ⁷ Four women have no such property and for the other eight there is no specification as to the means of acquisition.

- ⁸ There are no women with unspecified means of the acquisition for this kind of property.
- ⁹ LASLETT, P. *Introduction: The History of the Family*, in: *Household and Family in Past Time*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, p. 28-31. The appropriateness of Laslett's classification is proved by the empirical sources used, i.e. census registers, household registers (including their definition of the term "household") and ethnographic field materials. The characteristics of the local concepts of family and household allow for the synonymous use of the two terms for the purposes of the present analysis. The specific, rare cases precluding the similar use have been taken into consideration. On the synonymous use of the terms mentioned see TODOROVA, M. *Balkan Family Structure and the European Pattern. Demographic Development in Ottoman Bulgaria*. The American University Press, New York, 1993, p. 109; BRUNBAUER, U. "Structura na domakinstvata v Srednite Rodopi (1850-1930)," in *Balkanistic Forum*, 3, 1997, p. 39-58; MITTERAUER, M., KAGAN, A., "Russian and Central Family Structures: A Comparative View," in *Journal of Family History*, Spring, 1982, p. 103-131.
- ¹⁰ For the techniques used in producing a representative data extract by means of lottery selection see TSONEV, V. *Osnovi na reprezentativnoto izuchavane*, Nauka i Izkustvo, Sofia, 1958, p. 65-70, 124-125 and the following.
- ¹¹ The variation is determined by the maximum stochastic fault and shows the limits of the household average size for the general totality, which includes 284 and 589 households for General Nikolaev for 1935 and 1946 respectively, and 372 households for Sekirovo. The size of the data extracts has been calculated on the basis of the maximum stochastic fault. For General Nikolaev's extracts for 1935 and 1946 these faults are 25 percent (with a stochastic tolerance of 32 percent) and 36 percent (with a stochastic tolerance of 36 percent) respectively. For Sekirovo's data extract for 1946 the maximum fault is 40 percent (with a stochastic tolerance of 54 percent).
- ¹² See GOODY, J. *From Brideprice to Dowry. Appendix 2*, in *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 240-261; GOODY, J. "Bridewealth and Dowry in Africa and Eurasia," in GOODY, G., TAMBIAH, S. ed., *Bridewealth and Dowry*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973, pp. 1-58; BARFIELD T., ed., *The Dictionary of Anthropology*. Blackwell, Oxford, 1997, pp. 129-130.

- ¹³ See note 12.
- ¹⁴ BOURDIEU, P. *Prakticheskiat razum*, Kritika i Humanizum, Sofia, 1997, p. 143-174; BOURDIEU, P. *Kazani neshta*. UI Sv. Kl. Ohridski, Sofia, 1993, pp. 127-144.
- ¹⁵ E.g. compare with KASER, K. "Power and Inheritance. Male Domination, Property and Family in Eastern Europe, 1500-1900," in *Balkanistic Forum*, 1-2-3, 2002, pp. 19-40.
- ¹⁶ This is kept in the archives of the community centre of culture in today's district of General Nikolaev in the town of Rakovski.
- ¹⁷ For a more detailed description of the institution of the village nun see BONCHEVA, Tsv. *Brak i semeistvo pri bulgarite catolotsi ot Plovdivsko prez purvata polovina na XX v.* IMIR, Sofia, 2005, p. 48-108; BONCHEVA, Tsv. "Towards the Problem of Women's Religious Celibacy among the Bulgarian Catholics in Plovdiv Region during the First Half of the 20th Century," a paper presented at the conference Single Women in History 1000-2000, June 2006, Bristol, UK.