

HISTORICAL FAMILY SYSTEMS AND THE GREAT EUROPEAN DIVIDE: THE INVENTION OF THE SLAVIC EAST

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ABSTRACT: *In 1940, almost two years into World War II, the book, *Agrarverfassung und Bevölkerung in Litauen und Weißrussland* (“Agrarian constitution and population in Lithuania and Belarus”), was published by Werner Conze, a young German historian. The analysis of the data led Conze to detect a difference between West and East. The comparison emphasised the cultural divide between the Germans and the Slavs to the East by postulating smaller family sizes throughout the western or German-influenced part of historic Lithuania, and larger families with more complex structures throughout the Slavic parts of the country. Conze’s scientific insights remain present in today’s historical-demographic literature, and have become an essential building block of any argument in support of the validity and persistence of East-West differentials in family systems in East-Central Europe. Because of this study’s continued importance, it may prove useful to re-examine. Our critical assessment of some of Conze’s basic assumptions reveals serious shortcomings in his analysis, which resulted from making unwarranted inferences from non-representative and circumstantial evidence, and from his underlying motivation to search for German-Slavic differences. We will discuss the extent to which the pervading notion of East-West divide in historical East-Central Europe should be revised in response to these shortcomings. By uncovering the inadequacies of Conze’s contribution, we hope to pave the way for a better scientific understanding of familial characteristics of Eastern Europe, and to end the perpetuation of certain stereotypes of Slavic populations.*

I. INTRODUCTION

To many, Eastern Europe is a synonym for Slavic Europe. The equation is certainly not new. Hegel (1770–1831) considered “East of Europe” as the house of the “great Sclavonic nation.”

Despite its very limited coherence as a distinct region before 1945 (Turncock 1989, 1), ‘Eastern Europe’ was conceived as a regional concept already during the Enlightenment, when western travellers to eastern Europe invented the idea of the East as a backward, semi-savage realm loosely affiliated with the West (Wolff 1994; Lemberg 1985). European East provided Western Europe also with one of its first model of backwardness. Lands *im Osten von*

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Europa were a semi-developed and not yet quite enlightened world; again, in Hegel's words, a body of peoples that "has not appeared as an independent element in the series of phases that Reason has assumed in the World" (Hegel 1902, 363; also Wolff 1994, 314–315; Curta 2007, 1–35). In the course of the rise of racial discourse and nationalism during the 19th century this framework has been remolded to identify Eastern Europe as a dominantly Slavic realm, giving birth to the view according to which certain Slavic set of ideas, moral principles and religious views (even population behaviours), were determinative of Eastern Europe's further incapacity to advance.¹

Slavic populations also played an important role in sociological and historical scholarship on demography and family. Within that discourse, a suggestive 'discovery' of Eastern European demographic and familial distinctness took place. F. Le Play was the first to popularize the notion of a gradient of family and household types running from east to west, and to locate patriarchal, patrilocal multigenerational households among "Eastern nomads, Russian peasants, and the Slavs of Central Europe".² Independently from Le Play came in-

¹ The "invention of the Slavic East" was a complicated phenomenon with deep roots in the upheavals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (industrialization, urbanization, revolutions, nationalism, etc.), and the Germans were not the sole inventors of the "myth" of the Slavic east. On Eastern Europe's constitutive role in European identity construction, see Neumann 1999. A thoughtful analysis of the symbolic and sociological meanings of east and west in post-Cold War Europe was offered by Melegh (Melegh 2006).

² Le Play 1982[1872], 259; see also his mid-19th family model map in Le Play 1879, 683, as well as its reprint in Fauve-Chamoux and Ochiai 2009, 44–45. The North-South fault line suggested by Le Play followed the major political divisions of that time, placing Austria proper and Bohemia to the West; and Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia to the East. More importantly, the axis divided historical territories of the then nonexistent Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth into three largely unequal parts. The very western fringes of the Polish Republic were split between Le Play's Northern and Western zones, and, one may presume, they were supposed to carry on the characteristics of the stem family systems. The rest of the historical Commonwealth, including the heartland of present-day Poland with Cracov and Warsaw, like all the territories located more to the East (Red Ruthenia, Ukraine, Lithuania-Belarusia), were lumped together with the Balkans, the Asian part of Russia, and the Moroccan and Syrian families, as all representing the patriarchal family system.

It was Ewers who first claimed that strong lineage systems founded upon the existence of large, extended family collectives, were originally an inherent propensity of all Slavic societies (Ewers 1826).

Long before Le Play, the German Romantic August v. Haxthausen talked extensively about Slavic agrarian constitution and rural organization (Haxthausen 1842, 1846). However, Haxthausen's studies were neither overly concerned with the internal structure of family or household (his prime focus was the rural commune), nor they provided an European-wide typology of family systems organization (see Starr 1968; Dennison and Carus 2003). Even earlier, Malthus compared the affluence of modern Western society to non-Western societies by linking the differential well-being to specific population processes and suggesting dramatic differences in vital demographic rates between the two. However, the

tense discussion among the 19th century scholars of the morphology and social implications of the peculiar family type of *zadruga*, found in some parts of the Balkans, but often believed to encapsulate the very spirit of the Slavic familial tendencies. Although the discussion has never been fully resolved, it provided a powerful, albeit very impressionist, picture of the familial characteristics of the Eastern Europe Slavdom as the place where the relics of kindred groups have often persisted well into the Early Modern times (Leontovich 1867, 1896; Efimenko 1882, 1892; Lutchitsky 1896[1889]; Kovalevskii 1885; Vladimírsky-Budanov 1892; Kadlec 1898; Dovnar-Zapolsky 1909[1897]; Balzer 1899; Peisker 1899).³ This image would then soon sink deep into collective consciousness and, with time, would condition the framework of debates on the geography of family forms in Europe by equating those archaic forms of communal social organization with supposed propensity to multigenerational coresidence over the whole eastern part of the continent, and among Slavs in particular (Macfarlane 1978, 18–23).⁴

The notion of a uniform Eastern European family system, in which people marry young and live in patriarchal households, continued, and most pervasively advanced in the 20th century by J. Hajnal's 1965 path-breaking article on

Malthusian binarism was not so much about the difference between Western and Eastern Europe as it was about the divergence of the Far East.

³ Following Bogišić (1884), nearly all Southern-Slavic literature has deemed *zadruga* a relic of ancient all-Slavic forms of ancestral organization which can be traced back to the era of first settlement. Among the authors preoccupied with East-Central Europe, the following would have signed their name under this theory: Leontovich, Lutchitsky, Kadlec, and Balzer. The view was also embraced by Meitzen (1895). A staunch supporter of systematizing settlement studies into categories of 'ethnic properties', Meitzen distinguished the Slavs' inclination towards patterns of single farmstead settlement (*Einzelhof*) and building household-family communities. Within this framework, a numerous families would jointly preside over the land, as opposed to village forms based on individual property, supposedly typical of the Germans. Kovalevskii and Peisker broke away from the theory of Slavic lineage and the specificity of family communes, determining these as phenomena of a broader, Indo-European metrics. Dopsch (1909) rejected Meitzen's views, claiming that complex family forms were to occur in those regions where, owing to adverse conditions of farming, there appeared a strong need for cooperation between larger collectives.

⁴ In Macfarlane's landmark study, a stylized image of the peasantry without individualized ownership (which he derived from the assessment of peasant life in pre-emancipation Eastern Europe and Russia, where the household was supposed to act as the 'unit of ownership'), was linked with the patriarchal nature of those societies, universal and early marriage, and multiple family households. In his another, but barely known paper (Macfarlane 1980), Macfarlane tentatively suggested that that the "demographic structures" uncovered by historians, but Hajnal in particular, were conterminous with broad "cultural regions". He argued that whereas the distinctive features of the north-western pattern were to be found in their purest form in England, "that Hajnal's line seems to follow the Slav/non-Slav division".

marriage patterns in Europe (Hajnal 1965).⁵ Hajnal's article on marriage patterns was then followed by another paper in which he distinguished between two kinds of household formation system in preindustrial times. By calling explicitly what he published in 1982 a "sequel" to his famous 1965 essay, Hajnal seemed to suggest that the two supra-national, large-scale family systems he described (the simple and joint household systems) could be spatially conceptualised as referring to territories west and east of his famous line (Hajnal 1982).⁶

Although Hajnal's (as well as Laslett's) works are recognised as formative studies that have made a lasting impact on the field of research, they have, over the years, also been challenged, and have undergone a number of transformations. However, despite having been subjected to severe criticism over the last two decades (Kertzer 1991; Goody 1996; Faragó 1998; Plakans and Wetherell 1997; also Szoltysek 2008a, 2008b, 2009), Hajnal's modelling propositions have recently made a comeback. They have been given new life in the works of M. Mitterauer and K. Kaser.⁷ By discussing the Hajnal line in the context of the

⁵ Hajnal summarised his theses, developed on the basis of an analysis of aggregate statistics from around 1900, in a very concise statement: "The marriage pattern of most of Europe as it existed for at least two centuries up to 1940 was, so far as we can tell, unique or almost unique in the world. There is no known example of a population of non-European civilization which has had a similar pattern" (Hajnal 1965, 101). The "European pattern", the distinctive features of which Hajnal considered to be a high age at marriage and a high proportion of people who never marry at all, pervaded, according to him, "the whole of Europe except for the eastern and south-eastern portion" (Hajnal 1965, 101). Reiterating Le Play's original spatial exercises, Hajnal introduced an East-West gradient in European demographic behaviours with much greater force, and argued that "the European pattern extended over all of Europe to the west of a line running roughly from Leningrad (as it is now called) to Trieste" (Hajnal 1965, 101). This is how the since so often cited and discussed "Hajnal line" was conceived, soon assuming a truly iconic status. Hajnal's text can also be read as strongly suggesting the incommensurability of early marriage behaviour (ascribed to Eastern Europe) with simple or stem family systems believed to prevail in other parts of the continent.

⁶ In Hajnal's account, the crucial element linking marriage ages and family structure was the question of how retirement and the whole process of devolution of property was arranged within the family. Also in this regard, he contrasted "European" with "non-European" patterns, and suggested that the demographic behaviours of Eastern Europeans were not congruous with a "niche system" he ascribed to the West (Hajnal 1965, 133). On the 'otherization' of Eastern Europe in Anglo-Saxon population discourses, the Hajnal's one including, see Melegh (Melegh 2006, 69–76).

⁷ In the field of family studies, Mitterauer gained his high reputation thanks to his investigation into developmental processes of domestic groups, research on youth and service, as well as approaching diversity of family forms through the notion of differences in local ecotypes; see, for example, Mitterauer and Sieder 1983; Mitterauer 1985, 1992. Kaser's work has long been focused on the investigation of variation in household, family and inheritance patterns in the Balkans; see Kaser 1995, 2000, 2002.

regionality problem long known to mediaevalist scholars (i.e., the boundaries between Eastern and Western Christianity, and of mediaeval European colonisation), and by relating the line to the issue of the agrarian regimes widely recognised by economic historians, Mitterauer embedded Hajnal's original reasoning within a much more complex and ambitious framework for explaining family differentials in preindustrial Europe (Mitterauer 1999). Inspired by the explanatory power of Mitterauer's proposition, Karl Kaser of Graz has popularised the notion of a "Hajnal-Mitterauer line" (Kaser 1997).

While it is highly appealing from a theoretical standpoint, the concept of a Hajnal-Mitterauer line has not yet been sufficiently tested on the basis of data from the territories its authors were concerned with. Although Mitterauer and Kaser offer convincing data corpora and analysis of Eastern European family patterns, with an emphasis on Austro-Hungarian data pools, as well as on the Balkans and the South East, a much larger part of the supposed "transitional zone" – i.e., the one that spread across the historical Poland-Lithuania – has not been equally represented in their analysis and available data. Mitterauer balances that deficit by relying on literature, which upon further investigation was found to stretch back almost more than half a century, and is largely based on the writings and research of Werner Conze (Conze 1940). Conze's input into the field has therefore gone largely unexamined until today in the context of historic Eastern European family patterns.

In this paper, our goal will be to critically examine Conze's analysis.⁸ By taking a critical approach to Conze's work, we will be suggesting that:

- First his notion of the agrarian change in 16th-century Lithuania was derived essentially from the reading of "official" legal documents designed by the Duchy, while he ignored practical considerations guiding the reform's implementation at the local level (e.g., magnate estates of Belarus) (Conze 1940, 2–3).
- Second both before the agrarian reform and just after, peasant families might have been predominantly nuclear both in the Lithuanian and the Belarusian ethnic territories of the Grand Duchy. By relying on the quantitative and qualitative evidence available to us, we challenge Conze's claim that "in the 16th century the occurrence of the extended family (*Grossfamilien*) spread across Belarus" (Conze 1940, 36).

⁸ Conze's ingenious contribution to our understanding of the peasant family structure should not be overlooked, however. Modern family and household history has yet to capitalize more fully on Conze's two substantial insights, namely that (1) agrarian laws and constitutions have a profound impact on rural populations, and on population dynamics; and that (2) historical patterns of settlement provide important clues for the understanding of prevailing family and household structures. During 1970s, Berkner advocated for a similar approach to historical family patterns (see Berkner 1972).

- Third Conze’s tentative observation regarding the structurally-complex character of families in Belarus (in particular, in the Polessia area of southern Belarus) needs to be controlled by utilising reliable household data, which allows various kinds of statistical analysis. The same approach should be taken in relation to the supposed differences in family composition between Slavic (Belarusian and Ukrainian) and Baltic (Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian) populations. By referring to an unprecedented collection of historical household listings for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the 1790s, we will show that none of Conze’s claims are valid historically.

We organise this paper into the following parts. We begin with Conze’s biography, supplemented by his major study’s auctorial and ideological context, its methodological procedure, and its empirical content. This is followed by a brief description of Mitterauer’s and Kaser’s geographic models of family forms in historic Europe, with an indication of the role that Conze played in this theoretical framework. The next and largest section will re-examine *Agrarverfassung und Bevölkerung* using the three critical historical and statistical exercises already mentioned. We will conclude in the final part of the paper by suggesting how the pervading notion of the East-West divide in historical East-Central Europe should be revised. The prospects for establishing a better scientific understanding of familial characteristics of Eastern Europe, free from certain stereotypes about Slavic populations, will also be discussed.

II. W. CONZE AND THE EAST: CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Werner Conze (1910–1986) was born in 1910 in Neuhaus in Northern Germany. Because of his father’s occupation as a judge, the family moved frequently. After Gymnasium in Berlin, he decided to study art history, and enrolled at the University of Marburg, but later switched subjects to become a historian and changed universities (Dunkhase 2010, chapter 1).⁹ During his studies in Marburg, Leipzig, Königsberg and the Herder Institute in Riga, Conze developed strong interests in agrarian history and the history of human settlements (Haar 2000, 89). It was also in these early student years that he joined the elitist and *völkisch*-oriented academic group DAG, or the *Deutsche Akademische Gildenschaft* (German Academic Guildhood). The organisation was part of the greater German *Bund* youth movement popular in the interwar period, which emphasised not only the outdoors, hiking and camping, but also staunch German patriotism (Dunkhase 2010, chapter 1).

⁹ We were using an unpublished PhD-dissertation manuscript available from the author. It was finally published when this article was finished.

Conze's teachers in Leipzig included the right-wing sociologists Hans Freyer (1887–1969) and Gunther Ipsen (1899–1984), both outspoken practitioners of *völkisch* and racist population science. Ipsen, in particular, greatly influenced Conze. His *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) theories, along with his obsession with data, statistics and numeric patterns, left permanent impressions on the young student (Etzemüller 2001, 66).¹⁰

In 1931, Conze left Leipzig and went to the University of Königsberg in East Prussia (Kaliningrad, today Russia) to look for a thesis adviser who could provide him with a topic. Already then, the traditional focus on mathematics and natural science at the Albertina University was replaced by an emotional mix of nationalism and political agitation heartily supported by various German students' associations which often exhorted their more nationalist-oriented members to spend at least one semester studying in Königsberg to demonstrate their patriotic solidarity. Consequently, Königsberg rose to become one of the most important centres of National Socialist research in the years leading up to WWII.

Conze found himself invigorated by that atmosphere. He became a student of Hans Rothfels (1891–1976), a nationalist and conservative historian whose main interest was in the research of Eastern Europe, who soon became the most influential mentor in Conze's life. From 1929 onwards, he personally oversaw student excursions and field trips to neighbouring Baltic states that were designed to encourage students to conduct ethnographic, demographic and social field research on settlement forms, history and language (Dunkhase 2010, chapter 2). It was on these trips that Rothfels drew Conze's attention to the German

¹⁰ It was mainly thanks to Ipsen's theoretical attempts at rethinking the relationship between population and resources in the light of the *Volkist* theories of race that the Slavs of Eastern Europe came to occupy critical position in the construction of juxtaposed "population regimes". In Ipsen's writings, from Wilhelm Riehl's ethnographies "good peasants" (following impartibility of farms) were invariably presented as unequivocally Germanic, and the "bad peasants" as Slavic (Etzemüller 2001., 50). Consequently, it was claimed that the *Hufenverfassung* ("the hide constitution"), a specific landholding pattern imposed on German and other peasants of Western and Central Europe by the nobility, distinguished "Germanic" rural societies from their Slavic counterparts. In Ipsen's accounts, the importance of the *Hufenverfassung* extended much beyond the specificities of the agrarian organization, since it supposedly captured the essence of the German peasantry throughout history. It prescribed the allocation of standardised units of arables known as hides (*Hufen*) to individual families, imposed the impartibility of holdings, as well as the prerequisites for marriage in the form of available self-sufficient positions or niches, all with the aim of facilitating the "autoregulation of population in the living space". Ipsen's account of Eastern Europe, by contrast, was seen foremost as the locus of the "agrarian overpopulation" caused by the Slavic inclination to the partibility of farms and joint property ownership, facilitating the complexity of residential arrangements and early marriage, in effect leading to an unbounded growth of each family and of the population at large. See Ipsen 1933; also: Schlumbohm 2000, 77; Ehmer 1992/1993, 60–70; Ehmer 1991, 10; Fertig 2001, 18–19.

language enclave of Hirschenhof which became his master's thesis topic (Conze 1934).¹¹ However, Rothfels was soon dismissed from his post in 1934 because of his Jewish descent, and during its final stages Conze's work was supervised by Gunther Ipsen. In the meantime, young Conze applied for NSDAP membership in the process of joining the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, or Storm Troopers), and his entrance into the party was officially approved in 1937 (Dunkhase 2010, chapter 3.1).

Cronze's further scientific development should be understood in the context of widespread advocacy for what came to be known as German *Ostforschung* (Research of the East). As an academic discipline it had its roots in the late 19th century, although its formation took place around 1914, and was closely connected to WWI. Whereas *Osteuropaforschung* regarded societies and countries of Eastern Europe as autonomous objects of research, *Ostforschung* was concerned with the fight for "Germandom". After Germany's defeat in WWI, it became a chief tool for challenging the Treaty of Versailles. Almost from the initialisation of *Ostforschung* after WWI, the Second Polish Republic became its main focus (it had been re-created as an independent state in 1918, but it was not until 1922 that the frontiers had been established). By the early 1930s, Germany intensified its Polish studies in order to build a "properly armed, broad, defensive front to oppose the Poles" (Burleigh 1988, 51). In 1932, the Prussian Ministry of State got involved and endorsed a plan to centralise the groups concerned with German *Ostforschung*. The result was the creation of a central agency in 1931–1933 and in 1933, shortly after the National Socialists had become in charge of government this administrative unit adopted the title *Publikationsstelle* (Publication Office), and became a public relations institution for *Ostforschung* (Burleigh 1988, 24–75).

There are several characteristics that have been found to be crucial for German *Ostforschung* at that time. First, there was a strong focus on the connection between population and *Lebensraum* ('living space'). Demographic development was understood as a function of the territory available for human habitation. Second, it was widely advised that the concepts of *Volksboden* and *Kulturboden* be adopted. *Volksboden* was defined as areas settled by the Germans, and territories where the German language was spoken. Only two-thirds of this area was within the boundaries of the post-World War I German Reich. *Kulturboden* was defined as constituting areas that had been touched by German cultural influence in the past, and where palpable traces of German culture could still be found. Substantial areas of Denmark, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania were classified as German *Kulturboden* (Burleigh 1988, 25–27; Penck 1926; also Szoltysek 2005). The perception of the German cultural influence was derived from such parameters as settlement forms, build-

¹¹ This was a German settlement founded in the 18th century by Russia. In Conze's time, it was in Latvia and went by the name Irši near Liepkalne.

ing styles, family patterns and agricultural habits, and – last, but not least, a specific landholding pattern known as *Hufenverfassung*.

Third, research goals were highly politicised, and were conceptualised as representing long-range historical arguments to challenge Polish territorial acquisitions after WWI. Fourth, an emphasis on pre- and medieval history was encouraged because of the utility of providing arguments for “Germandom” (Dunkhase 2010, chapter 3.1), as well as an interdisciplinary framework merging history, agrarian studies, sociology and archaeology. Fifth, special emphasis was placed on the revaluation of archival mass sources, which were thought to have the potential to become “weapons forged from the sources” (Maschke 1931, 37–39). Finally, researchers were advised to stress continuity over historical change (see Ehmer 1992/1993; Ehmer 2000; Mackensen and Reulecke 2005; Van Horn Melton 1994; Götz 1999). Most of these characteristics can be found in Conze’s academic works.

His thesis, *Hirschenhof. Die Geschichte einer deutschen Sprachinsel in Livland* („Hirschenhof. History of a German Linguistic Enclave in Latvia”), was published in 1934.¹² In this study, Conze drew the named distinction between the *Deutscher Volksboden* (Soil of the German Nation) and the *Deutscher Kulturboden* (Soil of German Culture), and placed Hirschenhof into the latter category (Conze 1934, 8–9). He also gave some further details by explaining the differences between the South and the German North East. In Yugoslavia, Bohemia and Austria, Conze argued, German peasants would have settled and turned their surroundings into a permanent German *Volksboden*. The situation would have been different altogether in the North East. Out there, German settlers had taken on an active role as leaders and had become the ruling class. But they remained a minority, and merely infused their surroundings with German culture, thus making the land German *Kulturboden*, instead of demographically converting it into *Volksboden*. Conze’s position was a moderate one, given that there were more anti-Slavic views in circulation at the time (Conze 1934, 8–9).¹³

In November 1935 Conze started the habilitation process under the guidance of Ipsen, and was made Ipsen’s university assistant. At this time, the two men had already decided on a topic, melding Conze’s previous training as a historian with Ipsen’s interest in *völkisch* population research. Ipsen recommended Conze’s habilitation candidacy to the public administration, along with the observation that Conze had already proved through his Hirschenhof study that

¹² The monograph offered a classical historical structure and did not yet seek to address demographic questions.

¹³ The popular assertion was that Slavic settlement in the Northeast was only to be seen as interlude in history because the area had really been Teutonic first.

he was able, in character and scientific training, to participate successfully in the *völkisch* frontier struggle.¹⁴

Conze worked on his habilitation for five years. His thesis was approved in October 1940 at the University of Vienna, where Ipsen had earlier taken a prestigious teaching position. The habilitation, *Agrarverfassung und Bevölkerung in Litauen und Weißrussland*, appeared in print in Leipzig in the same year (Conze 1940)¹⁵. The academic community received it with praise, and generally commented positively on the utilisation of its quantitative data. The study was written with a notable absence of political haranguing. Conze seemingly did not share Ipsen's seething racism or his dark visions of ethnic obliteration. Comparatively, Conze's presentation is constrained and dry, taking a decidedly "objective" perspective. Even so, *Agrarverfassung und Bevölkerung* was steeped in German *Ostforschung*. It almost exemplarily followed the movement's most important narratives and theoretical approaches. In addition, the study's academic origin is intrinsically linked to places and organisations, which not only spearheaded German *Ostforschung*, but more or less invented it. Just a few months into working on his habilitation, Conze resigned in Königsberg and accepted a scholarship for *Ostforschung* with the "PuSte", the *Publikations-Stelle* (Publication Office) in Berlin¹⁶. This was part of a plan to mould the young historian – then aged 26 – into an expert on the "Wilna Region" (now area surrounding Vilnius in Lithuania). Some of his mentors who had written recommendations supporting his acceptance to "PuSte" included Theodor Oberländer (1905–1998), a dyed-in-the-wool National Socialist since the beginning and a trained agronomist and economist, as well as Albert Brackmann (1871–1952), the director of the *Geheime Staatsarchiv*. The scholarship enabled Conze to travel to north-eastern Poland and to Wilna (Dunkhase 2010, chapter 3.2). Back in Königsberg in 1937, Conze embarked on a NODFG-sponsored (abbreviation from *Nordost-Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* – the "North-East German Research Community") research trip to the archives of Wilna, and he was on the payroll of the 1937 "PuSte" founded jour-

¹⁴ Conze's sketchy outline of ideas from 1935 mentioned: "...the development of the old Lithuanian-Belarusian areas ... the great agrarian reform of the 16th century... the link between agrarian constitution, social structure, and population growth."; see Dunkhase 2010, chapter 3.1.

¹⁵ As indicated by the double title and the insertion "*Teil I*" (Part 1), the opus was planned as a two-volume book. But the second part, "Belarus," was never finished. According to the historian Wolfgang Schieder, Conze's student and research assistant during the post-WWII Münster and Heidelberg years, Conze had indeed already started some preliminary research in the 1940s, but the material was most likely abandoned in Königsberg in 1945. And, later, work was not resumed on this topic. Schieder's personal communication with B. Zuber-Goldstein (E-Mail MPIDR, 23.01.2009).

¹⁶ "PuSte" evolved into the central agency for the coordination, endowment and publication of National Socialist research of the eastern regions until 1945.

nal “*Jomsburg*”, which was to popularise the fruits of *Ostforschung* to a wider public (Burleigh 1988, 139). The years 1936–1939 brought about an intensification of Conze’s German nationalist and anti-Semitic views, and an increasing convergence with National Socialist politics concerning the plans for the “East” (Dunkhase 2010, chapter 3.2).

The habilitation research of W. Conze was meant to provide the most thorough “empirical” support for Ipsen’s theories of population by proving the incommensurability of the “Slavic way of life” with the demographic behaviour characteristic of German or non-Slavic communities in the German Baltic *Kulturboden* (Conze 1940, 1–4). Conze used historical materials found in Wilna, Kaunas and Königsberg to examine the demographic effects of introducing the “hide constitution” (*Hufenverfassungssystem*) on rural populations of Belarusians and Lithuanians in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the 16th century up to 1795.¹⁷ Conze claimed that the rates of population growth in early modern times differed significantly between the two groups, since only among the Slavs did population numbers double between the 16th and 18th centuries showing their hierarchical inferiority toward Germans and below them to Lithuanians.¹⁸ He attributed this difference to diverging attitudes towards the newly implemented hide system. The latter was accepted by the Lithuanian population, which complied with the farm size tailored to a nuclear family. On the other hand, the Slavs (Belarusians) of the eastern part of the Grand Duchy refused to accept the system, and continued to follow their “small peasant instincts,” as manifested in the real partition of their allocated hides, and worked the land with complex families up to the late 18th century (Conze 1940, 122–123, 140–141, 174, 206). Conze attributed this difference in attitudes between the Lithuanians and the Belarusians to long-term cultural preferences regarding family co-residence and property devolution, as well as to historic settlement patterns.¹⁹ Whereas Lithuanians were displaying less complex familial organi-

¹⁷ The reform led to the following: a compulsory consolidation of the intermixed manorial estates; the equal distribution of the arable land among peasant families and the reorganisation of open-field agriculture into “*włóka*” (*manus*; hide; 33 morgi or some 60 acres), which then were to be subdivided into three parallel strips or arables; the introduction of a three-year crop rotation; the extension of manors; turning the peasants into serfs; and, the replacement of all older systems of property management by the system of land-holding in return for labour service on the demesne estates. Conze claimed his research referred to the whole of Lithuania within its boundaries of 1569 (Conze 1940, 5–12).

¹⁸ Conze’s world view was based on a hierarchic ranking of peoples. There were Germans on the top, then Lithuanians, and only then Slavs. Jewish population was considered to be outside any ranking, not even a population as such, but an overly negative factor in all societies; see Conze 1940, 206; Lausecker 2008.

¹⁹ “The reason why the reforms of the 16th century created bigger [more populated] villages in the Eastern Slavic areas rather than in the Lithuanian ones obviously stems from the difference between Slavic ‘*Dvorišče*’ type of settlement and Lithuanian farmhouses. The ‘*Dvorišče*’ has been more densely occupied than the homestead of the Lithuanian farmer”

sation as early as in the 16th century, large families (*Grossfamilien*) were widespread throughout the whole of ethnic Belarus. Admittedly, extended families also existed in the Lithuanian regions, but in Belarus their size was on average much bigger. The above-average occurrence of extended families, Conze claimed, was detectable especially in the “backward” region of Polessia in the southern marchland area of Belarus. According to Conze, the socio-demographic fault line between these two different agrarian regimes lay somewhere between the southern fringes of the heartland of ethnic Lithuania in Samogitia (Polish: *Żmudź*) and the Grodna area to the southeast. To the north of this area, the “auto-regulative” agrarian system based on nuclear families was supposed to prevail among Lithuanians; while to the south and south-west, a divisibility of holdings, coupled with a propensity towards more communal forms of residence, was believed to be much more prevalent (Conze 1940, 33–36).

Not long after its publication, Conze’s work was heavily criticised for not fully acknowledging its inferences to limited source material with substantial holes (especially for the time period of the 17th century), and for its unbalanced geographical distribution. Łowmiański objected to Conze’s population estimates for the 16th and the end of the 18th centuries (including his estimates of the mean household size), and also to his uncritical examination of the estate inventories. According to Łowmiański, Conze’s attempt at explaining differences in demographic, family and economic characteristics between the households of the Lithuanians and the Slavs in ethno-cultural terms was totally unjustifiable, since such divergences could be explained in purely economic terms.²⁰ Morzy also claimed that Conze’s population estimates were not convincing (Morzy 1965, 4). For Wauker, in turn, equally dubious was Conze’s distinction between the populations of the Lithuanians and the Belarusians. He also noted that the body of sources was, in general, a weakness of Conze’s study, and asserted that the hide constitution was effectively put to use at an earlier point in time in a much greater number of demesne estates than Conze acknowledged. Wauker also pointed out some blatant errors in Conze’s arithmetical calculations, which enabled him to conclude that “Conze’s population estimates are completely worthless, while at the same time he was not able to demonstrate sufficiently without doubt, that there is in fact a noteworthy difference

(Conze 1940, 28–29). One of the early reviewers of Conze’s work went so far as to claim that it “clearly demonstrated, that there is a stronger biological reproduction of the Slavic population element than there is of the Eastern Balts – and this despite unfavourable social and settlement conditions” (Seraphim 1941).

²⁰ While Lithuanian areas were more involved in grain production for export, peasant agriculture in Belarus was of a more subsistence nature, with only a marginal share of an export-oriented crop production (see Łowmiański 1947). Equally critical: Zorn 1987; Lausecker 2008, 100.

between the population growth of Lithuanians and Belarusians” (Wauker 2003, 368–373; similarly in Łowmiański 1947; also Zorn 1987, 248).

The week before the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Conze was drafted, and in April 1940 he was transferred to the 291st Infantry Division later deployed to France for active duty. Wounded, he spent the second half of 1940 in Königsberg, where he put his finishing touches on his habilitation. The thesis defence took place in Vienna in December of the same year. Soon after, Conze returned to active duty, participating in the invasion of Russia from 1941 onwards. In October 1942, he was appointed to a position as a professor at the *Reichsuniversität* Posen, the National Socialist replacement of the previously Polish Piast University in Poznań. During a front leave he delivered his inaugural lecture, once again focusing on his *leitmotif*, overpopulation against the backdrop of land allocation. When World War II ended, he was taken briefly into prisoner-of-war custody by the USSR, but was released soon after. After several years spent in limbo after the war, Conze managed to secure a lecturer position with a steady salary in Münster (1950–51). He then went on to reinvent himself as a highly respected historian of the *Bundesrepublik*.²¹ He was even appointed as rector of the University of Heidelberg (the oldest university in Germany) for half a year (1969–1970) before retiring. In his later years, he returned to his research interest of his youth, German history in the East. He died in Heidelberg six years later at the age of 75. Posthumously, Werner Conze and his colleague Theodor Schieder became the centre of a critical controversy at the German *Historikertag* of 1998 in Frankfurt, and this has triggered a new wave of interest in German historiography by younger historians. Nonetheless, Conze’s notion of persistent differences in familial organisation between Slavs and non-Slavs of East Central Europe outlived its author.

²¹ Conze invented for himself the narrative that his research had been focused on social history and economic history. He rewrote his habilitation lecture (1940) and published it again in 1953 affirming his old opinions: the Slavic farmer avoided the challenges of the *Hufe*, while the Jews invaded the villages, thus blocking the drainage of overpopulation of the rural folk to the cities and small towns (Conze 1953; see also Lausecker 2008, 100–105). Apart from this, Conze published numerous works on German history, many of them becoming standard textbooks, like *Deutsche Einheit* (Münster, 1958); *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (co-edited by O. Brunner; 8 volumes, starting in 1972); *Deutsche Geschichte. Epochen und Daten* (co-edited by V. Hentschel; Freiburg, 1972); *Der Nationalsozialismus 1919–1933, die Krise der Weimarer Republik und die nationalsozialistische Machttergreifung* (Stuttgart, 1983), and *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas*, 10 volumes, brought out in a new edition in 1994 by the eminent Siedler Verlag.

III. THE VICIOUS CIRCLE: THE HAJNAL-MITTERAUER LINE AND THE RESTATEMENT OF THE GREAT DIVIDE IN EASTERN EUROPE

Notwithstanding all uncertainties regarding the appropriateness of Hajnal's positioning of demographic regimes in Eastern Europe, his modelling propositions were given a new life in the works of M. Mitterauer (also K. Kaser). According to Mitterauer, it was the *Hufenverfassungssystem* – i.e. the specific landholding pattern based on the impartible *manus* or hide, discussed earlier in the works of G. Ipsen and W. Conze – that had formed the foundation for the unique European household formation pattern in Western and Central Europe, but only in some parts of Eastern Europe. In its origin and disposition, there were two essential features of the *Hufe* system. One was the principle of single-heir impartible farm succession, whereby only one of the sons could inherit and marry. The second was a “one couple-per-farm policy”, the rule originating in the Carolingian period which stated that only one married couple with children could live off a particular hide. According to Mitterauer, the uniform populating of *Hufe* with nuclear families and the simultaneous prevention of a numerical accretion of farming families on them, were the results of a systematic policy of the seignery devised so as to facilitate the most beneficial collection of a tribute (Mitterauer 1999, 204, 211–215; Kaser 2001, 31 ff ; also Mitterauer 2003b, 42–69).²² However, both features worked against the formation and sustainability of complex families. Although households with co-residing relatives could occasionally also emerge under the *Hufenverfassung* rules, such multi-generational units would differ structurally from complex residential arrangements typical of joint family systems, if only in terms of their exclusively linear extension and the placement of the authority position in the middle generation (Mitterauer 1999, 203–204, 211–216; Kaser 2000, 67–74; Kaser 2001, 39–41; Kaser 2002, 375–395).²³

²² Additional rules stemmed from certain characteristics of the *Hufe* system, such as the following: (1) no marriage previous to the succession of property, (2) frequent handing over of farmsteads through remarriage of a widow, (3) retirement (*Ausgedinge*) as a form of maintenance of the parents within a household which has been passed down to younger generation and (4) life-cycle domestic service as a flexible form of labour supplementation according to the individual needs of the farmstead.

²³ For Kaser, the very meaning of social structures created by the *Hufenverfassung* system and, consequently, the importance of the Hajnal-Mitterauer line rests primarily on dividing areas with impartible inheritance (*Anerbenrecht*) from those displaying partible inheritance systems. The original Latin term used to denote a hide on the area of Germanic settlement was *terra unius familiae* (“land of one family”), referring to a unit of land sufficient to support one family group. Interestingly, Bloch (Bloch 1943, 268–269) linked the great *Hufe* with the patriarchal ‘great’ family and concluded that the occupation of European central regions in the early centuries of the Germanic settlement must have been the work of patriarchal family of several generations and several collateral households living around a common hearth. See also Postan 1973, 16.

Both Mitterauer and Kaser maintained that the *Hufenverfassung* system was spread over part of other Eastern European territories due to the German colonisation movement of the Middle Ages (Mitterauer 1999, 210 ff.; Kaser 2001). Mitterauer, however, rightly took pains to delineate precisely the eastern boundary of this agricultural pattern. Drawing on the German literature on medieval colonisation and rural settlement patterns, he claimed the eastern border of the hide system was to be found in the Baltic provinces, the former East Prussia, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Silesia, Bohemia, Moravia and southern Poland, as well as in large parts of western Hungary, Lower Austria, Styria and Slovenia. The main point that should be emphasised in this context is that Mitterauer's description of the eastern extension of the *Hufen* system, with its characteristics of late marriage, simple household structure and diminished lineage, bears a striking resemblance to the Hajnal line. In the words of Mitterauer, "the extension of the Medieval colonization movement in Eastern Europe corresponds with the border which John Hajnal found for distribution of the *European Marriage Pattern* in 1965 in an obvious way" (Mitterauer 1994, 4; repeated in Mitterauer 1997, 40–41; Mitterauer 1999, 2010; also in Kaser 2000, 67). To the east of this region, it was argued, a sort of "transitional zone" became apparent, an area "in which the settlement pattern may not be exclusively defined by systematic village structures [inherent to the *Hufenverfassung*], but where they are very frequent. This particularly applies to large parts of the medieval kingdom of Poland. In the early modern period, methodical settlement in this region was intensified and partially extended beyond it, for example in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This East Central European zone of planned settlements marks the region that was successively penetrated by patterns of western agricultural form from the high Middle Ages up to the Early Modern period" (Mitterauer 1999, 210).

Mitterauer attributed the limited penetration of the *Hufen* system in Eastern Europe to differences between Eastern and Western Christianity. Homogenous social structures produced by the colonisation movement, he argued, "never went beyond the dividing line between the Western and Eastern Church. Also, the outposts of the colonisation only rarely went further than this border". It was only through the values of Western Christendom that a high marriage age and the overcoming of patrilineal principles of household formation was finally possible within the seigneurial framework. According to Mitterauer, this diverging effect of Western and Eastern Christendom is explained less by differences in family and marriage regulations between the two churches, as by the weaker institutional power of the Orthodox church to control the kinship customs and practices of the pre-Christian substratum (religiously motivated idea of lineage; the Levirate; ancestral worship) (Mitterauer 1994, 3, 11–12; Mitterauer 1996, 394–395; Mitterauer 2003a, 42–43; also Kaser 2000, 65, 69–75). Other factors responsible for sustaining the "non-Western-like" family and

kinship patterns east of the “transition zone” were the isolation with regard to transport, the low degree of urbanisation, the absence of feudal structures and the low penetration by state authorities (Mitterauer 1994).

While it is highly appealing from a theoretical perspective, the concept of the Hajnal-Mitterauer line has not yet been tested empirically with regard to the concerned territories. Although Mitterauer and Kaser offer convincing data corpora and analysis of Eastern European family patterns, with an emphasis on Austro-Hungarian and Bohemian data pools as well as in the Balkans, a much larger part of the supposed “transitional zone” – which spread across the historical Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – has not been equally represented in their analysis and available data (Ehmer 1991; Cerman 2001; Kaser 1997; Kaser 2000). In spite of the fact that Austrian scholars had a good empirical evidence of the variability of family systems in preindustrial Russia, their sense of the familial constitution of the Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian populations derives not from concrete empirical research on demographic patterns, but primarily from the German *Ostforschung* literature. This analysis stretches back almost more than half a century, and is largely based on the writings and research of W. Conze (Mitterauer 1999, 217 ff; Mitterauer and Kagan 1982; Cerman 2002).²⁴ Referring to the Commonwealth’s eastern territories, Mitterauer translated Conze’s arguments about differences between Lithuanian/Latvian and Slavonic (Belarusian) settlement and agrarian patterns into modern kinship and household structure terminology. While patterns prevalent among the former were supposed to lead to diminished lineage relationships and nuclear residential patterns among the peasantry, a historically widespread system of “large families” (*Grossfamilien*) based on the collective ownership of land and free divisibility of holdings in Belarus did not permit the concept of single-family farming based on *Hufe* to become widespread (Mitterauer 1999, 217–219).²⁵

²⁴ Only five papers in Polish related to family history were available to the authors, and only one that actually contained a direct empirical investigation of family composition in some Polish territories; see Kaser 2002, 376. Kaser (Kaser 2000, 124) rightly refers to the only available published research on family structure in Lithuania by Višniauskaitė, with, however, no indication that the latter’s findings and hypotheses undermine the very argument about Eastern European divergent family developments (Višniauskaitė’s research is presented further in the main text).

²⁵ “The situation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after the introduction of the *Hufe* reform by King Sigismund August”, Mitterauer concluded, “is a strong argument for the hypothesis that an interrelation exists between east colonisation and the development of the Hajnal line. The Hajnal line runs between the old Lithuanian settlement region and the formerly Rurikid princedoms in White Russia, which had come under Lithuanian rule. It thus corresponds to the deviation between areas of the Grand Duchy where the *Hufe* reform had been successfully introduced and those where this succeeded incompletely or not at all. The rules of household formation drawn up by Hajnal apply for these regions (...)” (Mitterauer 1999, 219).

Still, however, Mitterauer's and Kaser's concept of a transition zone between different family and kinship systems in East-Central Europe does not specify what sort of demographic and family phenomena, and in what proportions, researchers are likely to encounter within the transition areas. Thus, these phenomena should be investigated using "real" data from the concerned regions. More importantly, neither Mitterauer nor Kaser seem to be concerned with debates and controversies surrounding the topic of "German colonisation of the East," and all the related topics so essential to the work of Conze.²⁶ In addition, neither of them was in a position to verify the validity of Conze's empirical findings.

IV. RE-EXAMINING CONZE

Although a classic form of the three-field system based on hides was introduced into Lithuania as early as the middle of the 15th century, decisive steps to disseminate this method were first taken in mid-16th century (during the so-called "voloka reform"; Polish, *pomiara włóczna*). Conze is right in attributing to that agrarian change a decisive role in transforming the family and residence patterns of the East European peasantry. Many researchers, both before and after Conze, have suggested that the main effect of *pomiara* was the decline in "large, multigenerational households." But, unlike in Mitterauer's contribution, this influence has never been elaborated by Eastern European scholars. Morzy argued that *pomiara* accelerated the already ongoing process of the individualisation of families (Morzy 1965, 122–123; also Kernazhytsky 1931, 123; Rawita-Gawroński 1904, 163; Lubomirski 1855, 220–221). Pochilevich reiterated that argument, but warned that the reform was not fully capable of eliminating joint families from the Belarusian landscape (Pochilevich 1957, 16, 27).

²⁶ However, as Piskorski put it recently with reference to mainstream historical works on the topic written between 1840–1970 by both Germans and the Poles, the "research on the medieval 'colonization of the east' is (...) a model example of utilitarian conceptions of the past, and is in this sense an excellent illustration of what historiography should not be". Typically, the German way of instrumentalising the "Medieval colonisation" was to argue that East-Central European lands were only able to develop at all from the 10th century onwards thanks to the achievements of German culture. "The arrival of numerous German settlers, importing this culture in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, enabled the countries of east central Europe to enter the family of 'civilized' states. They owed all their later successes to their embracing of German culture, and all their failures to their rejection of it" (Piskorski 2004, 323–325). Walter Kuhn, the author of a classic reference source for the history of German settlement in Central Europe – *Siedlungsgeschichte Oberschlesiens* (Würzburg, 1954), during the early 1940s used his extensive empirical knowledge of German linguistic enclaves in Galizia and Volhynia in resettlement actions in occupied Poland (Burleigh 1988, 106–107, 176–178).

What differentiates these scholars from Conze was their perception of the reform's spatial coverage. French argued authoritatively that "the uniformity with which the three-field system was introduced into Lithuania was remarkable, as was the wholesale nature of the reform. Arable and villages were transformed, in what must have been an upheaval of considerable scale (...). No less was the speed with which the reform was accomplished. By 1569, (...) the work was apparently complete in the three principal [ducal] provinces of Lithuania." He added that "the majority of church and noble landowners followed the royal example, with the consequence that the new regime was introduced over a wide region in a very brief period of time" (French 1970, 106, 118). Many other scholars have suggested that, in the second half of the 17th century, the reorganisation of open-field agriculture into 'włóka' (*voloka*, that is *manus*; hide; 33 *morgi*, or some 60 acres) was widespread in central and western Belarus (Picheta 1958, 228–242; Ochmański 1986, 163–165, 175–183, 187–195; Kozlovskij 1969, 43; Kozlovskij 1970, 209).

Indeed, the reform was not implemented equally easily, or to the same degree, everywhere in Belarus. Conze is certainly right in pinpointing difficulties that the reform's introduction faced in the Polessia region. However, it is difficult to escape the feeling that his arguments about the refusal of the Belarusians to accept the hide constitution represent fallacious testimony resulting from selective and biased treatment of archival resources.

The reform's implementation in Polessia was severely hindered, but this was essentially due to the region's harsh ecological conditions. French offers a reasonable explanation for why the redistribution of the peasant arable lands and their subdivision into three fields in 1557 failed in some dozens of villages in Polessia. "In those areas," he wrote, "swamps were extremely extensive, (...) and they covered many hundreds of square miles and the only dry sites for settlements and fields were tiny 'islets' of sand. Such hostile conditions completely frustrated the overseers; in these great swamps lay the 71 villages not reorganised. Their arable land was scattered about as of old in dozens of minute plots, perched on higher 'islets' of dry ground. In these villages the *dvorishche* remained as the unit of land-holding and the pre-reform scale of tax assessment was continued. Needless to say, in such conditions no attempt was made to establish demesne". Independent accounts of similar difficulties in Polessia have been given by other authors (French 1970, 115–116; French 1969a, 131; Kernazhytsky 1931, 73; Kozlovskij 1969, 43; Kozlovskij 1970, 209; Siekierski 1981; Kosman 1970).

Conze's claim that Belarusians refused to accept the hide constitution is essentially based on scanty evidence, such as a report of peasants' protests against the implementation of the new agrarian order in one district of north-eastern

Polessia (Bobruysk *starostvo*).²⁷ A more careful look at the circumstances prevailing in the area in question reveals, however, that the peasants' material and economic concerns, rather than their familial orientation, were decisive in the ongoing failure of the reform in that setting. The goal of the reform was a decisive redesign of the basic structure in the immediate environment of peasants, and it thus imposed strong coercive pressures on the villagers. The hide constitution not only forced them to abandon the arable pieces of land they had been cultivating for decades in favour of the new ones allocated to them by the supervisors, it also demanded that peasant houses and premises be relocated. The latter, understandably, implied the expenditure of enormous amounts of material and human resources, which had to be generated by individual families or domestic collectives (Kernazhytsky 1931, 89–90). Given such material and economic pressures, it is possible to imagine that the peasants' refusal to follow the new rules could have easily arisen regardless of concerns about intergenerational and kin co-residence.²⁸ Last but not least, the results of the peasant resistance in *Bobruyskie* could not change dramatically the villagers' post-reform residential patterns. In the 1930s, Kernazhytsky applied a formal typology of domestic groups to the listing of families, which was part of the area's inventory that was taken shortly after the reform had been fully implemented. He found that, in 1639, over 58% of all domestic groups were households of individual families (Kernazhytsky 1931, 126–133; French 1969a, 52).²⁹

Another factor overlooked by Conze was the role of local agency, namely local landlords, in the reform process in a given place, and the flexible ways in which local estate managers and owners responded to the general patterns of the new order. There is abundant evidence suggesting that Eastern European landlords were customarily concerned with their peasants' residential arrangements. They often required the latter to be modified, and usually had the real power necessary to implement their wishes (Bieńkowski 1959, 69–70; Kapyski and Kapyski 1993, 44–45; Pawlik 1915, 48, 133–134; Łysiak 1965, 161–162). Estate instructions from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth suggest that, in all parts of its entire territory, the maintenance (or, if necessary, the restoration)

²⁷ Conze admitted himself that apart from Bobruysk *starostvo* cases of the peasants' open defense against the reform are not reported in the sources [sic!] (Conze 1940, 122).

²⁸ In fact, the reconstruction of many village sites in Bobruysk District was quite hampered and many villages remained 'as of old'. This happened, however, not necessarily due to the villagers' resistance, but more because of adverse ecological conditions (see French 1969a, 52–54).

²⁹ Using the 1639 cadaster, French estimated that only 6 out of at least 46 villages that belonged to the Bobruysk *starostvo* were not converted to the *voloka* system. Nevertheless, contrary to western Belarus, even in those settlements in Bobruysk District where the reform was implemented, a standard layout of the arable rearranged in three contiguous fields was only partially introduced, and in some villages fragmentation of arable differed little from the pre-reform pattern of scattered parcels (see French 1969b, 38–44, 55).

of tax-or labour-capable family units was part of the landlords' most explicit economic interests. At the same time, the reform created strong incentives for neolocal household formation among the subject farmers (Szołtysek and Zuber-Goldstein 2009). Usually, however, these "neolocal incentives from above" were subjected to an ecological sustainability test. This can be illustrated with several examples.

As early as during the first wave of the *voloka* reform in the southern or Polessian part of Belarus of 1557 (*Pinsk* starostvo), an interesting alteration in the general policy towards peasant residential rules can be observed. This aspect went unnoticed by Conze, despite his otherwise extensive use of the same archival material. As in many other places where *pomiara* was taking place, in the Polessia area surrounding the town of Pinsk, estate administrators relocated peasant families and domestic groups so as to create peasant landholdings equally equipped with manpower. Interestingly, after having faced a spatial pattern of highly dispersed arables in the Pinsk area (caused by the prevalence of swamps and marshes), the inspectors decided to follow the rule that each holding of an equal size of *voloka* should be cultivated either by a father with an adult (married) son, or by two married brothers (Kosman 1970, 132). This pattern of restructuring "from above" was responsible for sustaining a large number of multigenerational or otherwise joint-family households in that area. The cultural inclinations of the peasantry did not seem to play any role at all in this process. More generally, in Belarus, where the mid-17th-century wars caused severe population losses, and where a substantial amount of non-cultivated arable land existed until the very end of the 18th century, the serf-owners' perennial desire to repopulate deserted holdings on their estates by splitting up large farms and supporting individual families was often hindered by place-specific agricultural conditions. Despite the abundance of land which was suitable for re-cultivation by the rural classes, the scarcity of labour and the almost complete lack of a market for hired labor, coupled with the low levels of agricultural development typical of Belarus, made the effective multiplication of the numbers of labour-capable household units on the basis of nuclear households unlikely in the "east" (Szołtysek 2009, 81; also French 1969b, 46–48). Lithuanian-Belarusian landlords seemed to have been well aware that certain socioeconomic and ecological conditions imposed constraints on their otherwise more-or-less "western" economic orientation. The *Instructions* suggest that Belarusian seigneurs understood quite well that, given the poor agricultural conditions of Belarus and the often limited resources available for supporting individual families, a temporary co-residence of several (usually two) family units might help to prevent the creation of economically unviable households. "The estate manager should not allow family households to split", one of the *Instructions* stipulated, "unless there are two male adults in the sub-unit wishing to stay where it was before, and at least one adult son in the

branch is intending to become independent (...). This is “because singletons [single householders] split between two households are likely to fall into poverty due to the lack of sufficient manpower” (Grodzienska Crown estate, 1777). Another *Instruction* provided even more details regarding such practices among the landowners: “(...) it is a duty of a peasant supervisor (*dziesiątnik*) to make sure that none of the peasant householders having only two persons capable of working the corvée (“osoby zgodne do roboty” - adults) will not split apart to occupy a separate dwelling, unless they have children sufficiently grown up to provide support in all household tasks” (Grodzienska Crown estate, 1777) (Pawlik 1915, quot. from 134, 167; also 47, 53, 277).³⁰

Such a policy could have been effective enough to create a relatively high quota of extended and multiple-family households in Belarus. Reading *Instructions* and other archival materials of that time, one can easily get an impression of the landlords’ persistent attempts to cope in a highly flexible way with Belarus’ economic disparities relative to other parts of the Commonwealth (Szołtysek and Zuber-Goldstein 2009). The cultural or economic preferences of Belarusian peasants for any specific type of residence can hardly be detected from available sources. Łowmiański must have been right when he argued – in stark disagreement with Conze – that all differences in demographic, family and economic characteristics between the households of the Lithuanians and of the Slavs in the Grand Duchy can be satisfactorily explained in purely economic terms. The ethno-cultural explanations suggested by Conze are too far-reaching, and do not seem to be justified.

One of the major problems with Conze’s reasoning regarding Lithuanian and Belarusian demographic regimes was that it never operated with a precise typology of family or households arrangements. This is not an unusual situation, even with regards to more contemporary investigations on familial organisation of the inhabitants of the historical Polish Commonwealth. For instance, Soviet scholars who attempted in the second half of the 20th century to reconstruct the agrarian regimes and the material conditions of the lives of the peasantry on its eastern fringes either did not touch upon the issue of family systems at all, or refrained from exploring the question after few cursory remarks (Guldon and Krikun 1979, 181–186; Krykun 1977, 92–103). Interestingly enough, Pochilevich argued that what characterised the Belarusian peasantry was the “*balshoya zlozhonaya semya*” (large joint family) made up of both distant relatives and unrelated persons. According to Pochilevich, families of this type

³⁰ Since landlords made an effort to stipulate rules prohibiting separation of single nuclei, there must have been a peasant practice (or an inclination) favouring splitting up and household independence that would have encouraged such laws to be put forward. If that had been the case, then we will have proof of the existence of “atomistic” principles of household organisation among the population traditionally thought to have adhered to collectivism and familism. See Verdon 1998.

supposedly expanded even to the size of a tiny village (“*dworzyszczka*”), remaining organised on a scheme of land and duty sharing. Up until the mid-16th century, the existence of such large families, often comprising 10 to 20 males, was necessitated by labour requirements inherent to the situation of peasants occupying large holdings (one *voloka*). Only during the second half of the century did family arrangements of this sort give way to patterns of small individual families. By the mid-17th century, large joint families were most likely already vanishing from Belarus, except from its most eastern part, where the process unfolded with up to a century of delay (Pochilevich 1952, 338, 386–87; Pochilevich 1957, 15, 27; Pochilevich 1958, 745; Pochilevich 1973, 63; also Morzy 1965, 122–123). However, Pochilevich’s reasoning, like that of many others, suffered from relying on circumstantial and non-systematic evidence, and therefore can be of little help to us in investigating the validity of Conze’s claims.

However, with recourse to estate inventories from various areas of ethnic Lithuania from the period between the 16th and the end of the 19th centuries (overall, data for 1,083 households were used), Višniauskaitė demonstrated that the “grand indissoluble family” (*bolschoya nerazdelennaia semya*), a Russian term which is equivalent to the “joint family” term commonly used in the West did not constitute a dominant household form in any of the time periods under scrutiny (Višniauskaitė 1964). By transposing the Lithuanian data from 1594–1700 onto Laslett’s typology, we get the percentage of simple households estimated at 81%, with only a very slight contribution of multiple-family domestic groups, valued at 6.9%.³¹ As Višniauskaitė puts it, this highly nuclear family system was a direct consequence of two connected processes: the decomposition of the lineage relationship, which affected the Balts as early as in the 13th and 14th centuries, and the marked decline in family communes (*semeyna obshchina*) that followed. According to Višniauskaitė, both of these processes were additionally strengthened by the agrarian reforms of the mid-16th century, which Conze, Mitterauer and Kaser were all concerned with. Moreover, she notes that the later periods—especially the 18th century, which brought about a significant increase in peasant obligations due to manorialism and the compulsory labour it inflicted upon the peasants—led to a drastic rise in the number of multiple family households in Lithuania: between 1700 and 1800 they already constituted 33% of all domestic units. Following this thread, the change in residential patterns of the Lithuanian peasantry was supposedly caused by economic factors, such as the accumulation of family labour on the holding. The latter tendency acquired the status of the most significant local familial strategies, which brought forth the imposition of restraints on neolocal household

³¹ Aggregated data for 15 estates with 791 households (see Višniauskaitė 1964, 8–12).

formation. This, in turn, meant that the division of larger household communes became less frequent (Višniauskaitė 1964, 4–5).

What may present itself as a perfect validation of Conze's notion of the specificity of the Lithuanian demographic and familial conduit is actually contradicted by similar evidence from various Belarusian territories. Zinovy and Boris Kopyski processed data for 252 settlements, for which the estate inventories ascertained kin relations between co-residing males (5,663 households or *dymy*). They concluded that, on average, one household in the territories under scrutiny comprised no more than 1.2 marital-family units. Moreover, 85.6% (4,741) of the total households had only one such a unit (including, potentially, some extended coresident relatives), and the remaining 14.4% were of the joint type. Out of the latter, 745 households (10.6% of the total number) contained two small families co-residing, whereas only 266 cases (3.8%) consisted of three and more family units. In line with Višniauskaitė's assertions pertaining to Lithuania proper, Kopyski also argued that in Belarus the transition from the 16th to the 17th centuries was marked by an increasing simplification of peasant residential patterns. It is generally acknowledged that, between the end of the 16th and the mid-17th centuries, one-family households came to make up the majority of domestic units throughout the Belarusian territory (Kapyski and Kapyski 1993, 43).

V. Golubev, in turn, has estimated somewhat smaller figures. True, he saw Belarusian landlords of the second half of the 16th century as actively pursuing the process of splitting multiple-family units into individual households (Golubev 1992, 63), a phenomenon Conze also mentioned. By the end of the century, along with the introduction of peasant compulsory labour within the manorial system, individual families operating on one holding started to play a decisive role in Belarus. However, according to Golubev's estimations based on the inventories of church estates (1,700 peasant domestic units), only 73% of all households consisted of individual families (some of which may have actually contained individual extended relatives). The share of the latter would, however, decline on a trajectory of movement to the east of Belarus (only 46.5% of total households in eastern Belarus) (Golubev 1992, 88).

V. Nosevich, who analysed micro-census data for several communities of central Belarus (north from the city of Minsk) between the mid-16th century and the 1850s, went even further. He asserted that, at least according to the 16th-century data, there was no reason to draw a sharp distinction between domestic group structures in Eastern and Western Europe. With recourse to estate inventories, Nosevich demonstrated that nuclear family households (heads living with or without sons) dominated in Belarus between 1545 and 1596 (between 70% and 89% of total households), whereas in some places, such a pattern developed even before the great agrarian change brought about by the *voloka* reform (Nosevich 2004, 81–87). However, in accordance with the earlier

framework put forth by Višniauskaitė, he also pointed out the emergence of a more distinct and more complex family pattern in central Belarus during the 18th and the 19th centuries, linking it to the gradual increase in feudal obligations imposed on the peasantry by the landlords (Nosevich 2004, 157–176). Even so, however, over almost the entire 18th century, as long as agricultural population in Belarus remained relatively free from the most exploitative forms of serfdom control, it followed a rather moderate pattern of household complexity. Towards the end of the 18th century, particularly after the annexation of Belarus-Lithuania by the Russian Empire, the family pattern in Belarus gradually transformed into more communal forms where the share of multiple families was significantly above 50%. It was this 19th-century phenomenon, but not its various antecedents, that made the distinction between family structures in Eastern and Western Europe so attractive to Western scholars (Nosevich 2007).³²

The above-mentioned studies are certainly not free of drawbacks, and the data they present should be accepted with certain limitations.³³ However they surpass Conze's contributions in several respects, such as data collection or geo-spatial awareness. This is why we argue that they can be preliminarily taken as refuting Conze's claims regarding the persistence of extended family predominance across early modern Belarus.

Another drawback inherent in Conze's homogenising approach to the Belarusian family system was that he neglected the region's internal demographic variation. This problem can now be elaborated by referring to more reliable statistical information on household composition and structure, which is available from an unprecedented collection of historical household listings for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the 1790s. The statistics for the Lithuanian-Belarusian territories used in this subsection derive from the Russian fifth "soul revision" of 1795, or micro-censuses listing all individuals by residential units.³⁴

³² There have only been a handful of studies for Russia, that together suggest substantial variation in household patterns within Russia in the cross-section, as well as change over time (Polla 2006, 2007; Mironov and Eklof 2000, vol. 1, 130–131).

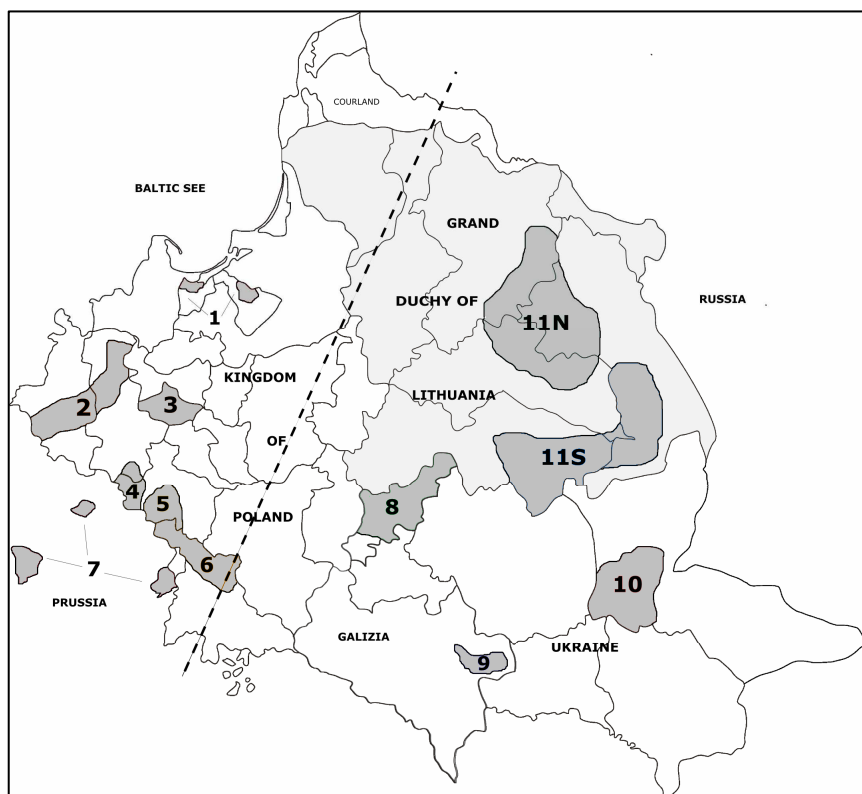
³³ In the estate inventories of Lithuania-Belarus of that time, single widows and widowers in the population, and sometimes even retired parents, were frequently not registered.

³⁴ Designed as periodic tax censuses to be used by the central government to assess the poll tax to which all male peasants in Russia were liable, they were drawn on the eastern outskirts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth first in 1782, after the annexion of these territories a decade earlier. However, it was not before 1795 when the first comprehensive survey has been conducted to cover the Belarussian heartland of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after the second partition of Poland. However, the character of the 1795 Belarussian censuses cannot be simply equated with other Russian "soul revisions" discussed so far in the literature (e.g. Dennison 2003, 35–41). All available evidence suggests that in the 1795 Belarussian revision the definition of the household was much closer to the traditional Polish

This body of data forms a part of a much larger data collection designed to enable the analysis of household structure and composition of communities located both west and east of Hajnal's and Mitterauer's lines (Map 1)³⁵. More than 90% of those listings come from the period 1766–1799, while all precede the abolition of serfdom in the territories in question. If reference were made to historic Polish boundaries just before 1772, then the 234 parishes would form a long belt spread over the eastern parts of Prussian Silesia (reg. 7) and the western fringes of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (regions 1 to 5). The coverage would then run through the western outskirts of the province of Lesser Poland (reg. 6) and stretch in the eastern direction towards the historic area of Red Ruthenia (reg. 8), central (Minskie voivodship) and southern Belarus (Polessia region) (reg. 11N and 11S respectively), and, finally, towards present-day western Ukraine (reg. 9 and 10).

concept than to the official Russian principles of taxation (e.g. the population was enumerated by residential groups that were classed by 'houses' or 'huts' (Polish *dom*; *chatupa*) in the Polish version of the revisions (see more in Szołtysek 2008a, 228–229). The data comes from National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk (microfilms in the possession of Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, were used). The earlier versions of the database considered here have so far become the basis for several analytical studies in international and Polish literature. Therefore, at this point we might omit the majority of methodological and source-related issues, as well as socio-economic characteristics of the investigated communities, since the above-mentioned studies have already covered them exhaustingly. See Szołtysek 2008a, 226–236; Szołtysek 2008b, 391–397.

³⁵ Since the publication of early results in 2008, the corpus of census micro-data for the Lithuanian-Belarussian territories was extended from 1259 to 7262 households leading to a change in the grouping of regions (comp. Szołtysek 2008a, 2008b). Acquisition of data from a random sample of 19 parishes from the Żytomierski district in the former Kiev voivodeship in northern Ukraine (a total of 2100 households) has in turn enriched the spatial distribution of objects in the south-east direction (the former 'middle-east cluster'). In the present analysis, however, the Ukrainian data play but a secondary role.



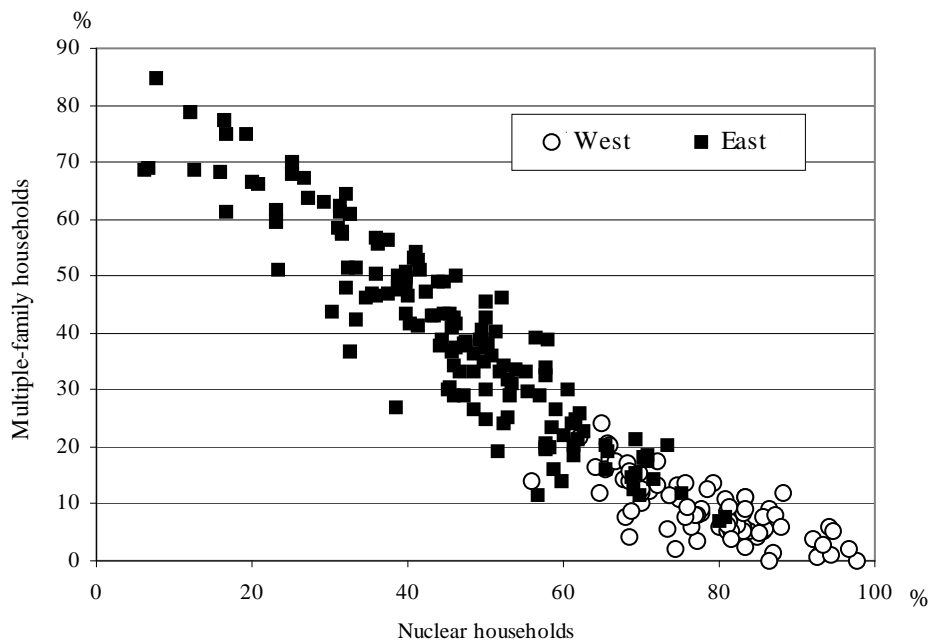
Source: CEURFAMFORM Project Database. Reference is made to historic boundaries of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before 1772 and its administrative divisions into voivodships. West of the 'line': 87 parishes, 11.638 households, population of 66.571 persons. East of the 'line': 149 parishes (or estates), 15.014 households, population of 89.236 persons. Region 11N (Vilayka, Minsk, Slutsk districts of Belarus): 37 estates, 3.378 households, population of 19.146 persons. Region 11S (Polessia; David-Gorodok, Mozyr, Bobruysk districts of Belarus): 42 estates, 3.884 households, population of 25.332 persons. (Map drawn up by M. Szoltysek).

Map 1

Spatial distribution of data within Poland-Lithuania (ca. 1772), and the supposed division of family systems in East-Central Europe, late eighteenth century

In our first exercise we used a very simple indicator (the relationship between the proportion of simple households and the proportion of multiple-family households) to plot the distribution of different family patterns among

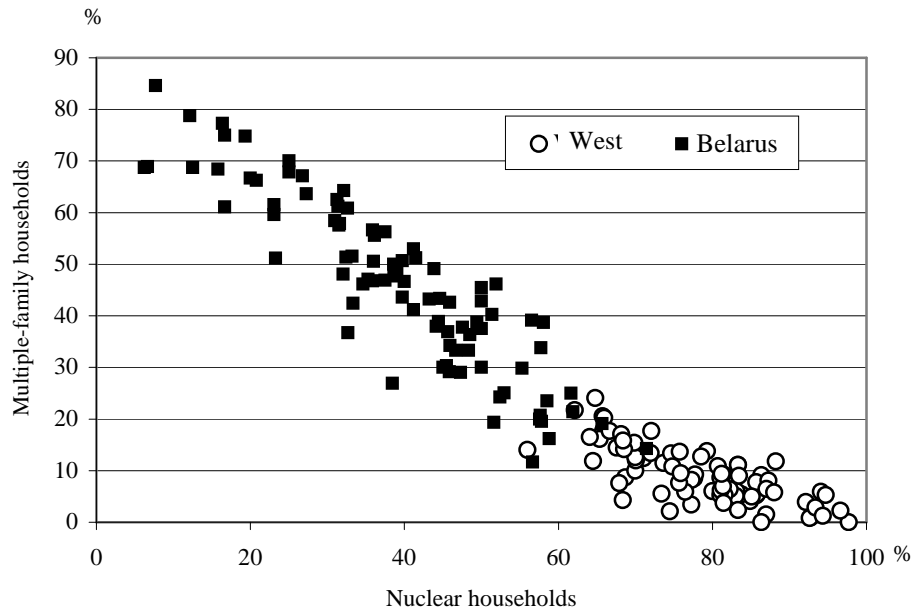
location points west and east of Hajnal's line (Figure 1). Contrary to the highly condensed distribution of score points for communities located to the west of the line, the east reveals striking diversity in the arrangement of the values of the selected variables. Although we may agree that a relatively homogenous pattern of nuclear household structure existed west of the supposed transition line, to claim that a similar uniformity in living arrangements existed for the eastern areas would be entirely misleading. Approximately one third of the communities from the east revealed compositional characteristics more like the western pattern, and their substantial number would probably be undistinguishable from the latter in structural terms. Others, however, leaned towards a strikingly different direction. Still, households in the eastern territories were generally of a more complex structure than those in western Poland.



Source: CEURFAMFORM Project Database. Data as in Map 1.

Figure 1
Proportion of simple households related to the proportion of multiple-family households West and East of the Hajnal line in East-Central Europe, late eighteenth century

In order to remove the effects brought into Figure 1 through the data on Ukrainian and Red Ruthenian communities, we repeated the same exercise with Belarusian and western data alone (Figure 2). The close resemblance of some eastern and western communities observed previously has now disappeared: The majority of locations in Belarus exhibited more complex patterns of household structure than the west. However, the basic pattern of large-scale dispersion has been retained for Belarus. This high variability in the share of nuclear and multiple households suggests that those 90 Belarusian communities represented in Figure 2 varied enormously in their families' propensity towards different types of residence. The steady and even gradient of the value of the two variables between the extreme poles on the scale (from some 60%–70% of nuclear households and 15%–25% of multiple ones, to the absolute domination of joint units with only a 20% share of simple domestic groups), makes it very plain how inappropriate it would be to attribute one common family system to late 18th-century Belarus. This argument holds true even if Belarussian households were generally more complex than in the western part of Poland-Lithuania.



Source: CEURFAMFORM Project Database. Data as in Map 1.

Figure 2

Proportion of simple households related to the proportion of multiple-family households West of the Hajnal line in East-Central Europe and in Belarus, late eighteenth century

Indeed, additional statistical experiments performed on the 1795 micro-censuses corroborate that picture. The results of analysis of variance and pairwise multiple comparison procedures revealed significant differences on six out of eight selected variables between northern and southern Belarus (regions 11N and 11S respectively) (Table 1).³⁶ This suggests that two distinct family systems existed in northern and southern Belarus. More careful comparison of statistics on household and individual level variables for those two regional patterns would be meaningful (Table 2).³⁷

³⁶ On multiple comparisons using the *Holm-Sidak* method see Westfall et al 1999, 31.

³⁷ The socio-economic distinctiveness of Polesia (*Bobrujski, Mozyrski* and *Dawidgrodzki* districts of the region “11S” in the CEURFAMFORM database used here) has been receiving continual attention from scholars, researchers and authors who have all pointed out variations in the range, scope and consequences of the *voloka* reform, as well as

Table 1
Results of pairwise multiple comparison (the Holm-Sidak method) for two Belarusian regions (11N and 11S), 1795

Factor	Diff of Means	t	Unadjusted P	Critical Level	Significant?
% nuclear households	13,852	5,397	0,000000274	0,007	Yes
% multiple households (overall)	20,23	7,352	1,38E-11	0,006	Yes
% 'zadruga'-like multiple households	10,122	5,819	3,73E-08	0,006	Yes
% males ever married (20–29)	25,331	7,709	2,39E-12	0,005	Yes
% females ever married (20–29)	7,564	1,912	0,058	0,009	No
% CFUs in multiple hhs	20,709	7,165	3,79E-11	0,006	Yes
Coresident kin as % of all household members	7,618	5,429	0,000000236	0,007	Yes
% households with servants	2,713	2,38	0,0187	0,013	No

Overall significance level = 0,05.

Source: CEURFAMFORM Project Database. Data as in Map 1. (Micro-censuses for some estates had to be excluded as not suitable for reliable estimations).

'Nuclear' and 'multiple' households refer to household types 3a-3d and 5a-5f respectively of the Hammel-Laslett scheme (see Hammel and Laslett 1874, 73–109).

The 'zadruga'-like multiple households= households with secondary unit(s) of sibling(s) or other lateral kin disposed sideways from head (with or without head's parental generation), of which some may have their own downward extension, plus those with widowed heads co-residing with at least two conjugal family units of the offspring, siblings, or grandchildren on one level.

CFU= conjugal family unit (marital couple with or without children; lone parent with a child).

"Ever married" persons were considered those living in conjugal relationship, widowed or – in case of unspecified marital status – those co-residing with at least one child.

First, the revealed regionalisation partly corroborates Conze's insights into family patterns in historic Belarus. Both in his accounts, as well as according to the results produced by our experiments, the region where family households were most densely inhabited by co-resident kin was Polesia (reg. 11S). In this area, the mean household size was close to 6.5 persons, but almost a quarter of the whole population lived in domestic groups consisting of 10 persons or more. Out of almost 4,000 households, less than 35% had a simple structure, whereas more than half of them were multi-generational, multiple-family do-

the area's distinct environmental characteristics. The cultural autonomy of Polesia has been advocated by Jeleńska 1891, 290–331, 479–520; Rawita-Gawroński 1904; Dvornar-Zapolsky 1909[1897]; Bondarczyk et al. 1987; Obrębski 2007.

mestic groups. All in all, 67% of the total population in the Polessian sample lived in multiple-family households in the census year.

Table 2
Summary characteristics of family systems: southern (Polessia) and northern Belarus from 1795 compared

	Polessia (region 11S)	Central Belarus (region 11N)
Mean household size	6.42 (6.58)	5.46 (5.69)
Mean houseful size (incl. lodgers)	6.51 (6.69)	5.69 (5.97)
% population in households ≥ 10	24.6	12
% population in multiple family households	67.7	41.4
% nuclear households	33.9	50
% extended households	10.9	16.4
% multiple-family households	54.6	31.1
CFU per one household (mean)	2.1	1.5
% hhs with CFUs of 2+	54.8	31.3
Offspring per household (mean)	2.34 (2.51)	2.26 (2.44)
Relatives per 100 households	331	215
Coresident kin as % of total population	32.7	25.6
% households with servants	1.7	3.7
Servants as % of total population	0.2	0.8

Source: CEURFAMFORM Project Database. Data as in Map 1. (Micro-censuses for some estates had to be excluded as not suitable for reliable estimations).

'Nuclear' and 'multiple' households, as well as CFU (conjugal family unit) defined as in table 1.

Values in brackets refer to estimates adjusted after the exclusion of parishes with suspected underregistration of population aged 0–14.

Polessia can, however, by no means be considered representative of the whole of Belarus, and its peculiarity extended much beyond the specific unfavourable ecological conditions that prevailed in this remote area (see above). Not surprisingly, areas located more to the north, while still confined to Belarusian (or, East-Slavic, to be on safer ground) ethnic territories, displayed decidedly different family patterns. Data referring to the Minsk, Vileyka, Nowogrodek and Sluck districts of central Belarus (reg. 11N) all point to visibly more moderate levels of kin-related household complexity. In those areas, half of all households in the census year were of a simple structure, and the share of multi-generational units was nearly 50% smaller than in Polessia. The percentage of the population living in particularly large households was also visibly smaller, making up only half the proportion seen in southern Belarus. Living in a multiple-family environment was significantly less widespread in the centre, where it was experienced by only slightly more than 40% of all

persons registered in the census. All in all, although levels of household complexity in central Belarus unquestionably remained far above those typical for Western European societies, they still differ from the patterns seen in the southern, Polessian part of the region. Beyond any doubt, these non-negligible differences in the numerical value of household- and individual level variables point to the existence of different family systems in historic Belarus.³⁸

The standardised form in which the data on household structure and composition are presented in Table 2 makes them amenable to cross-regional comparisons at least to some extent. The issue of supposed differences in household patterns between Lithuanians and Belarusians has been already touched upon in the previous sections. Here, our intention is to extend comparative procedures so as to include other representatives of the Baltic ethnic groups.

Table 3
Belarusian and the Baltic household structure in comparison

Household type	REGION or settlement						
	Central Belarus (reg 11N), 1795	Polessia (reg. 11S), 1795	Urvaste, Estonia, 1752	Urvaste, Estonia, 1797	Vändra, Estonia, 1683	Karuse, Estonia, 1782	17 Courland estates (Latvia), 1797
Solitaires	1.1	0.2	0	2.7	3.8	0	–
No family	1,3	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.7	0	–
Simple households	50.0	33.9	30.9	41.2	65.2	48.0	33.3
Extended household	16.4	10.9	8.3	15.4	6.8	13.2	8.3
Multiple-family households	31.1	54.6	59.6	39.9	23.5	38.8	58.3

Hammel-Laslett scheme.

Source: two Belarusian regions - *CEURFAMFORM* Project Database (data as in Map 1); Urvaste – Waris 2004, 348; Karuse and Vändra – Palli 1983, 211–215; 17 Kurland estates – Plakans 1975, 644.

In Table 3, the available data related to household typology in the Baltic are compared with two Belarusian files. The results are striking, but not surprising. No clear-cut differences between Slavic and non-Slavic households patterns, as postulated by Conze, can be detected in the data covering the 17th and 18th cen-

³⁸ Other household related variables also exhibited significant variation throughout historical Belarus. Mean household size, for example, ranged enormously from 4.3 persons per household to 8.8 persons among 90 Belarusian locations. Median MHS was 6.3 persons per household, Q₁ (the lower quartile) equals 5.2, and Q₃ (upper quartile) was 7.

turies. This evidence of moderate household complexity in central Belarus is generally similar to data from two Estonian localities of the late 18th century. However, both in Urvaste in 1797, as well as in Karuse some 20 years earlier, shares of multigenerational households always exceeded the respective proportions of domestic groups in central Belarus. Seemingly, those two Estonian localities exhibited household systems that lean more towards kin-co-residence than was the case among Belarusian Slavs. This pattern is illustrated to an even greater extent by the comparison of Slavic data with mid-18th-century data from Urvaste, and with Courland files from 1797. Again, household complexity (proportions of multigenerational domestic units), is higher in the latter two files than in Belarus, regardless of whether the northern or southern parts of the latter region are compared. The complexity of the Polesian family pattern, so distinct within Belarus of the 18th century, is very much paralleled (or even exceeded) by data from Baltic areas.³⁹

We can argue that, even though Cozne rightly attributed a strong propensity towards co-residence with kin to the Polesian part of Belarus, he still wrongly assumed that pattern to be very different from tendencies observed among the Balts.

V. CONCLUSION

Regardless of the reception of this fact among academically active demographic *mainstream*, the last two decades were marked by questioning the view according to which demography – as a sub-discipline of social sciences – represented a purely value-free science, impervious to processes of ideological influence, politicization or ethnocentrism. A turn to epistemological reflection occurred which – stimulated today by most scholars engaged in anthropological demography and ‘critical demography’ – allowed to shed light on extra-scientific factors involved in the production of demographic knowledge, leading eventually to the placement of demographic studies within specific power relations (Hodgson 1983; Szreter 1993; Greenhalgh 1996; Riley 1999; Horton

³⁹ Comparing means for larger groupings with means from single communities may be misleading, however. Standard deviations for proportions of multiple-family households in Belarussian regions tell us very clearly that in none of them are the various examples tightly clustered around the mean (reg. 11N = 16.2; reg. 11S = 13.9). However, 95% confidence intervals suggest that in central Belarus, the probability of observing a share of multiple-family households outside the confidence limits of 29.7 and 38.2 was less than 0.05. Respective data for Polesia were 50.4 and 58.1. This suggests that, even if during various sampling procedures the excess of complexity in the Baltic relative to the Belarusian settlement locations were to diminish, an overall similarity of Slavic and non-Slavic patterns would be retained.

1999; Riley and McCarthy 2003, esp. 61–80; Szreter, Sholkamy, and Dharmalingam 2004, 3–33; Thornton 2005; Melegh 2006).

Sociological and demographic studies of the family have also been exposed to the threats of instrumentalisation. F. Le Play's or W. Riehel's classic works, regarded today as milestones in the development of sociological discourse of the family could not be distilled from their authors' value systems, and were actually more than purely scientific observations and recordings of social facts – they constituted the weapon which facilitated the fight for a subjectively desired social order (Adamovsky 2003, 424–425; Mogeý 1955, 314; Mogeý 1957, 310–315; Schlumbohm 2009, 81–85)⁴⁰.

Studies of the Balkan family illustrated a unique variant of this approach, with their almost uniform value orientation and ideology meant to provide empirical material with which to prove the existence of ancient and distinguished communal family forms among one or another ethnic or national group, for one or another political goal (Rihtman-Auguštin 2004, 23 ff.; Todorova 1989, 47; Kaser 2004; Vitorelli 2002).⁴¹

Some of the more modern models on European family systems have also suffered from similar entanglements. Hajnal and Laslett's debate on the geography of family forms of historical Europe – no matter how quantitative and supposedly objective terminology they applied – did not pertain to some marginal aspect of 'European identity,' but rather to issues of major significance for determining who and under what conditions belonged or, conversely, did not belong to Europe. Historical demographers – by linking individualization and rationalization of an individual to specific demographic conditions of the western part of the continent and seeing them as basic causal factors of modernization – tended to perpetuate the stereotype of familistic, changeless societies of the European East. This theme would often be supported with the notion of a 'comparative backwardness' of the region seen to 'lag behind' in its lack of urbanization, industrialization and modernization processes (Hajnal 1965, 131; Laslett 1983, 558–559; Schofield 1989, 284).⁴² It comes as no surprise then that such approaches have recently been facing gradually more severe criticism (Sovič 2008; Szoltysek 2005, 2008a; Todorova 1996; also Dennison and Carus 2003).

⁴⁰ Both Le Play and his peer W. Riehl were strongly affected by the intellectual, social and political context of their times. The influence often surfaced in the way the two of them conceptualized the object of their studies. Both regarded family in general and its multigenerational form in particular as a condition necessary for social stabilization and integration thanks to which societal habits and behavioural norms could be passed from one generation to the next. In their authors' designs, the studies were supposed to provide a viable programme of social restoration/rejuvenation in light of the conservatives' heated debates on the evolving condition of 19th century family.

⁴¹ On similar discussion within Japanese context, see Ochiai 2000.

⁴² Critically on this topic: Melegh 2006, 69–71; Szoltysek 2007.

Owing to its intellectual and ideological roots, Conze's work comes across as a particularly blatant example of political instrumentalisation first of the past and then also of historical research (similarly in: Ehmer 2000, 17). Conze's scientific insights continue to serve in today's historical-demographic literature as an essential building block of the argument that asserts the validity and persistence of the East-West differentials in family systems in East-Central Europe. Our attempt at merging intellectual history with historical-demographic investigation suggests that such a practice should be viewed as highly problematic from a scientific perspective. The re-examination of *Agrarverfassung und Bevölkerung* in light of other existing theories of spatial patterns of family in Eastern Europe and available qualitative and quantitative evidence has revealed serious shortcomings in Conze's analysis. These problems result from making unwarranted inferences based on non-representative and circumstantial evidence, which derive from Conze's underlying motivation to identify German-Slavic differences. The use of Conze's work in contemporary historical-demographic research must be meticulously revised, if not entirely abandoned. Referring to Conze's supposed "empirical" findings are not conclusive, but perpetuate certain stereotypes of Slavic populations and consolidates an opaque understanding of the East-West differentials in historical family forms.

Modern social science history and historical demography related to the Eastern European space (but not only, of course) should remain particularly cautious when trying to accommodate highly ideological and political works of the 1920s and 1930s into their corpus of knowledge. Many of those works, and Conze's pre-1945 contributions, serve as excellent examples of studies that hardly meet the methodological requirements of modern social science, especially when they generalise from single case studies. Failure to exclude these works may result in extravagant extrapolations from single cases or other non-representative datasets that would continue to foster tacit assumptions about European families in the past.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank J.E. Dunkhase from Freie Universität in Berlin for allowing us reading his unpublished PhD manuscript and to quote from it. Also, we thank A. Melegh for his comments on the earlier version of this paper.

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