

# Family Patterns in the Western and the Eastern World

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## Abstract

The great gulf between the Western and the Eastern world becoming obvious in the early modern times has also manifested in different family types. The Western family notches to the market economy very early while the Eastern family matches to subsistence economy and peasantry. While the West developed early the nuclear family, the East indulged the extended family. Both types of family determined a different role of women in family and society. Under the conditions of modernization and globalization, however, the Western type of family puts through increasingly, replacing the divergent forms of extended families.

I would like to shed some light on the history of the European family in the context of the global development of family structures and trace the historical lines up to the present day. Family sociologists find it difficult to place the structure of the contemporary family in historical and comparative cultural contexts, although many aspects and contours only become clear in this light, certainly more so than is possible in a purely contemporary analysis<sup>1</sup>.

The theory of the pre-industrial European family goes back to Thomas Robert Malthus. Modern versions of the theory of the European family generally refer to John Hajnal's approach from 1965, who, based on a statistical analysis of data from around 1900, established that the European family is characterized by small family structures and a high age at marriage. Hajnal summarized that this family form is preferably found in north-western and central Europe. East of the St. Petersburg/Trieste line and in the non-European advanced civilizations, on the other hand, an early age at marriage and extended and multifocal family forms are preferable. This often invoked line is imprecise; it would be more accurate to state it as Königsberg-Warsaw-Vienna-Trieste. The pre-industrial European family is the dominant form in north-western and central Europe, including Poland and to some extent the Czech Republic; its southern border is formed by the Alpine republics and the Loire in France.

Other family forms dominated to the east and south of this border. The pre-industrial families of Italy, Greece and Spain are predominantly cognatic as the third structural form and generally recognize the equal rights of children, including women, to inheritance. The dominant family form in Russia, the Baltic states, the Balkans, China, India and other pre-industrial advanced civilizations, on the other hand, is the patrilineal joint family, which was rather weakly represented in Europe and, if so, then only in the form of some of its core elements. Certainly, family and household forms and the modalities of inheritance law are quite diverse in all cultures. Nevertheless, the transcultural characteristics of family types

are dominant. In particular, the common features of the Eastern family form, which prevailed in large parts of Asia, are impressive and very profound. The essential structures of the patrilineal joint family can be found throughout Asia, across different cultures, regions and religions.

The typical European nuclear family is defined by parents and children living together in an economically independent household. Marriage creates a new household and a new family. Husband and wife jointly constitute this new family. The family is cognatic and tends towards neolocal residence or household takeover.

The Eastern patrilineal family, on the other hand, is based on a joint male inheritance. After the death of the father, the brothers take over the property together and remain in the parental household. As long as he is alive, they and their wives and children are under his rule. After marriage, the women move into the household of their husbands' father. This family form is not a small family, but rather an extended family form, a multifocal joint family. This family form is characterized by patrilocal residence and descent and by several couples living together in one household. After a few generations, these households are forced to divide and then grow again. Cultures in which joint families dominate therefore always have a certain proportion of nuclear families, although these only have this characteristic for one generation and should not be structurally confused with Western nuclear families - which unfortunately happens again and again.

In pre-industrial Russia, the proportion of joint families was over 60%, while the proportion of nuclear families was around 30%. It is important to emphasize that most of these nuclear families grew back into joint families within one generation. The figures and structures are similar in China, India, the Baltic states and the Balkans. The household sizes of joint families generally vary between 8 and 25 members.

The situation in Europe west of the famous line differs greatly from this. The proportion of nuclear families in England between the 16th and 19th centuries and in France north of the Loire in the 18th century was around 80% and the proportion of multifocal families was only 5%. In the Benelux countries, Germany, Poland and the Alpine republics, the proportion of nuclear families is also correspondingly high. In southern France and Spain, on the other hand, extended and multifocal families accounted for around 40% in the 18th century.

These figures prove the validity of the theory of the continental division of family forms and the correctness of the assumption of a rough but generally correct distinction between western and eastern family forms.

In the following, I will describe the structure of the two dominant family types in Eurasia, starting with the patrilineal joint family. The patrilineal joint family reckons kinship in the male line. Only the male blood relatives are related to each other, not the women who marry in. The core of the family therefore consists of the father, sons and their sons. The eldest living male is usually the head of the family, who rules over his sons, their wives and children. After the father's death, the sons inherit his property together. They usually remain together in the household or sooner or later divide the property between them. The division is often not made until the third or fourth generation, depending on the size of the household, economic considerations or disputes. In this way, over the course of generations, entire streets and villages emerge from the division of just one family. Household division does not mean family separation. All patrilineal family cultures around the world cultivate a pronounced ancestor cult, in which the cohesion of the male lineage and sacred descent are cultivated.

The marriages of sons and daughters are usually arranged by the fathers; there is no free choice of partner. The brides move into the household of the husband's family. They live there together with their husband's siblings and parents. The patrilocal residence is one reason for the low status of women in patrilineal cultures. She is not an essential part of the family into which she has married. She has no property or inheritance rights in the family. Her blood relatives, i.e. relatives in the female line, brothers-in-law, fathers-in-law and sons-in-law, do not form a common kinship with her husband's family. This family form is unilineal-patrilineal, not bilateral-cognatic.

In Eastern societies, marriage therefore does not create a new family or, as a rule, a new household. The couple is not autonomous, but is embedded in a kinship context of domination. They remain subject to this rule even if they are able to set up their own household. The patrilocal residence is the reason why economic independence in the form of income and property is not a prerequisite for marriage. The young couple is taken in and cared for in the parental household. In pre-industrial times, the age of marriage in Eastern cultures was therefore around ten years below the Western age of marriage. The average age of marriage for women in pre-industrial Russia, China, India, Japan and the Ottoman Empire was around 17 years, and for men around 20 years. In the 19th century, 90% of all Russian women were married by the age of 24. In the period from 1640 to 1990, only 5% of all Chinese women over the age of 30 were unmarried.

The marriages are arranged by the heads in the interests of family politics. The marriages are subordinated to the constraints and interests of the extended family. There is no free choice of partner. As a rule, patrilineal cultures largely prevent contact and communication between the sexes and especially between boys and girls. In India, even today, spouses are not supposed to have seen or met each other at all before marriage. At best, horoscopes or mutually presented interview protocols are accepted as additional touchstones of future harmony. The situation was similar in China and Russia until the 19th or 20th century.

In contrast to the old European family, the patrilineal family recognizes the man's right to divorce and allows wealthy men to marry several wives. Widows often remain single in their husband's family if they cannot be married by their husband's father, brother or another relative or return to their family of origin.

It can be clearly seen that the various elements of the patrilineal family are mutually dependent and form a coherent structure. This structural coherence can also be seen when analyzing the pre-industrial European nuclear family. Marriage west of the famous line established a new family. In legal terms, women and men played roughly equal roles in the constitution of a family. This bilateral and cognatic structure of marriage and family is the basis of the economic, social and legal self-sufficiency of the European family. Cognatic marriages and families are, by necessity, only loosely interwoven into kinship systems. Every marriage inevitably leads to a regrouping of kinship networks. The high status and independent contribution of women, the cognatic structure, the formation of a new family through marriage, the economic self-sufficiency of the household and loose kinship networks are thus intertwined and mutually dependent.

Marriage in Europe meant either taking over a household or setting up a new one. Either the couple took over the household of their deceased parents or set up their own. Or the death of a master craftsman allowed a journeyman to take over his position and set up a household and family on this basis. To set up a new household, the couple had to have

sufficient employment, income or inheritance to finance the new household. In an almost stationary economy, the death of a married couple would therefore have to be awaited before a marriage could take place.

In contrast to the Eastern family, the neolocal European family was based on the need for economic self-sufficiency. This was ensured by a strict policy of landlord and state marriage licenses. Poor and unemployed people were prohibited from marrying and having children. They were forced to work as unmarried servants in other people's households. A significant percentage remained unmarried for life. Around 20% of men who were 45 years old in England around 1800 were single. The proportion of lifelong unmarried women was also high. Between 1600 and 1800, less than half of 30-year-old men and women in England and Austria were married. Between 1750 and 1850, the average age of marriage in the Alpine region was 33 for men and 28 for women. This high marriage age is specific to ancient Europe and a key indicator of the special form of the European family. The age of marriage in Europe fell when economic conditions were good and rose when they were bad. Marriage age and birth rate were the result of economic cycles.

A high marriage age only acts as a preventative control on population growth if premarital sexuality can be largely successfully prevented. And indeed, family, village, professional and state controls ensured that premarital sexuality was largely prevented.

What did the youth of Europe do when they had to wait until the age of 25 or 35 for marriage and their own household? Young people often did not live with their parents, but worked in other people's households, in agricultural and craft businesses, as servants. In the period from 1574 to 1821, 60% of English youth between the ages of 15 and 24 worked as servants. The proportion of unmarried servants in the total population rose to 25% in Austria in the 19th century.

Serving as a servant was an interim phase between childhood at home and starting a household. It can be said that servant service was an attempt to postpone the age of marriage and prevent children from starting a household at an early age. Children should save and learn until they are able to take over the parental household or a job. Serving as a companion is also a result of European inheritance law. This is certainly multifaceted. But since Carolingian times, inheritance law has dominated in Europe, according to which only one child should inherit a farm or business, while the others give way, especially to servants. Servant service is therefore a function of small family, cognatic and neolocal structures. It is a European specificity.

Servant service, high age at marriage and neolocality are the causes of the widespread absence of marriage arrangements in Old Europe. Parents certainly tried to exert influence. However, the youth of Europe, especially when they were working as servants, were busy looking for a partner on their own. After all, they had enough time.

Its practices of divorce and remarriage can be deduced from the cognatic structure of European marriage. The bilateral foundation of household and property is the cause of monogamy and the ban on divorce for both sexes. In contrast to the patrilineal family, however, European women marry frequently and quickly after widowhood. The need to continue running the household and business in the small family structure meant that women could not remain single for long for economic and work organization reasons alone. This practice of remarriage meant that stepfathers, missing blood ties between family members and patchwork families were not uncommon in pre-industrial European society.

There are various approaches that attempt to explain the emergence of the European family as a special cultural form. However, a systematic theory is not even on the horizon. Some explain it from the Carolingian Hufen constitution, which is said to have emerged from the Roman colonate. Others explain it in terms of church policy, which was strongly opposed to marriage arrangements, endogamy and ancestor worship. Others explain it by the fact that the transition to trade, wage labor and capitalism in Europe began in the late Middle Ages. Family sociology has long held the view that the nuclear family is the family form best suited to the capitalist economy.

In industrial society, however, the nuclear family loses the character of the entire household and instead withdraws entirely to reproductive functions. Without the reproductive function of housewife and mother, without a long-term stable family, it would hardly have been possible for men to work in industrial society. This middle-class nuclear family was most widespread around 1960, when more than 90 % of the adult population was married. However, the growing prosperity after 1965 and the spread of women's employment has led to a loss of importance of the family since 1965. Small family reproduction and the market socialization of women, the balancing act between child and career, lead to tensions. Family and economy are diverging and conflicting subsystems.

The theory of individualization and differentiation sees today's diverse forms of partnership primarily as an adaptation to professional mobility constraints. The consequences are a drastic increase in the age of marriage, an increase in divorces and marital problems and a decline in the birth rate. Furthermore, a variety of partnership forms have become established that deviate from the conventional model of the nuclear family: People living alone, single parents, childless marriages and couples, couples living separately, non-exclusive couples, shared flats, etc. Normal families now make up less than 30% of all households in Germany. No one can predict future trends. Will the family ultimately disappear or will it only suffer a temporary or permanent loss of importance? I rather assume that there will be a permanent polarization of small families and individualistic forms. However, I maintain that the change in living arrangements in industrialized societies over the last 30 years represents something new in world history.

The bourgeois nuclear family differs from the pre-industrial one but not only in the loss of the function of the entire house. The ban on divorce and premarital abstinence have been lost. The middle-class family has become comparatively unstable. However, other characteristics of the modern family, which are often assumed to be recent, are centuries old.

How can one explain the emergence and demise of the patrilineal joint family? The causes of this family form lie in the legal and military control over land ownership in a subsistence society. The state, market economy and infrastructure are still poorly developed. Their strengthening and spread lead to the erosion of the joint family. In China, however, it persisted until the 20th century, especially in the countryside, and was only damaged by the communist reforms. Of course it has little chance of survival in Shanghai and Beijing, but in the 1990s it became increasingly widespread again in the countryside. Of course it has also lost many of its archaic features, but not the e.g. ancestor cult.

In northern India and Pakistan, the patrilineal joint family can still be found in the countryside today. Patrilineality, patrilocality and ancestor worship continue to be maintained. The prisons are full of men who have thrown acid on their daughters and sisters for talking to the postman. Virginity before marriage is a valuable asset and living together outside

of marriage is frowned upon. Even in the urban middle class, parents still choose their children's spouses, who have to comply with the choice. While multifocal families are common in rural areas, extended or nuclear families are common in cities.

In most developing countries, the average marriage age of women is now around 20 years, with considerable differences depending on social factors. In Islamic countries, e.g. in Morocco, the marriage age has increased over the last 10 years. The number of women with a higher level of education has increased dramatically. But unmarried thirty-year-old Moroccan women are still subject to considerable social and normative constraints. If they want to get married, they have to keep their virginity. Their thinking is still dominated by the religious necessity of virginity and by the fact that God has appointed them a husband for whom they must wait resignedly.

The young Japanese women, on the other hand, have decided on the conflict between freedom of movement and religion, which is certainly difficult for Muslim girls, in a clearly secular way. In Japan, the extended or core family predominated until the 1960s. The phase of the bourgeois nuclear family only lasted for a very short time in Japan. The women married young, and the marriages were usually arranged by dating agencies or parents. Just established, the nuclear family in Japan is apparently already disintegrating. For around 10 years, young people have preferred to stay with their parents without being married and spend their money on expensive consumer goods. However, the change in values in Japan over the last 10 to 15 years has obviously been more profound than it ever was in the sex revolution of the hippie era in the West. A survey of 6,000 girls between the ages of 15 and 21 showed that 43% of them, if they live in the city, have at least 5 male sex partners at the same time. If you live in the country, it's still 20%. The girls swap their sex partners with each other like they swap CDs. The young people are members of groups that have been formed and are being formed into ever larger networks in order to ensure fluctuation. Today, Japan's youth spend most of their free time in a never-ending series of shepherd's hours in which condoms are not used. Young people in Japan still believe that their ethnicity allows them to have unprotected sexual intercourse. The investigators came to the conclusion that these young people are now largely incapable of building a long-term relationship. Since there are always spoilsports who get involved with foreigners, it may be that the AIDS that is slowly spreading in Japan will not only educate young people to use condoms, but also to practice moderation.

Nevertheless, the development of lifestyles in Japan and the West shows that stable family forms are under considerable pressure and are in danger of erosion.

#### Different family types

<b>Nuclear family</b>	<b>Married couple (with children)</b>
<b>Extended family</b>	Any family form that is larger than the nuclear family (e.g. nuclear family with brother or sister of husband or wife in one household)
<b>Stem family</b>	Stem family expansion in a vertical direction: parents with at least one married child (usually a son) with grandchildren in the same household
<b>Ausgedingefamilie (Altenteil)</b>	European special form of the stem family. The parents remain in the household, but give control of the keys to a child.
<b>Joint family</b>	At least two married couples (with their children) in a household, usually parents and sons with their wives and children.
<b>Frèreche</b>	Special form of joint family: At least two married brothers with their families and descendants in one household. The brothers' parents have already died (2 generations)
<b>Extended joint family</b>	Parents (or parent) with at least two married children with their families and children in one household (3 or 4 generations)

#### Western Family Eastern Family

<b>European family in Northwest and Middle Europe</b>	<b>Patrilinear family (Balkan, Russia, China, India, Middle East)</b>
<b>Nuclear family</b>	Extended family
<b>Often only one child inherits</b>	Common heritage among males
<b>Neo-local residence</b>	Patrilocal residence
<b>Bilateral or cognatic family</b>	Patrilinear residence, wife joins husband's family
<b>High station of women</b>	Low station of women
<b>Late marriage</b>	Early marriage
<b>Marriage provides tenure or occupation</b>	Everybody is ought to marry
<b>Tendence to free choice of marriage partner</b>	Parental arrangement of consort
<b>High share of unmarried people</b>	Low share of unmarried people
<b>Monogamy</b>	polygamy for wealthy people
<b>Woman can marry again after her husband's death</b>	Wife remains in her defunct husband's home either as widow or marries another male member of that family or reverts to her original family
<b>Verdict of divorce for both sexes</b>	Divorce possible for men
<b>High marriage age as preventive birth control</b>	Greater numbers of children than in Europe, often infanticide
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	No apprenticeship
<b>Market economy</b>	Subsistence economy
<b>No family cult but in nobility</b>	Family cult and ancestor worship

## Footnotes

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