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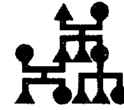

PROPERTY, PROGENY, AND EMOTION: FAMILY HISTORY IN A LEONESE VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT: *This article considers, from the historical, demographic, and anthropological points of view the various forms that the Leonese peasant family takes during its development cycle, and demonstrates the importance of extended and multiple family households in an area long characterized by partible inheritance and nuclear family households. Two methods of doing family history, at times held incompatible, are used and are shown to be complementary: a structural analysis of households, based on four household lists from 1920 to 1978, and on demographic data from 1739 to 1978; and an interpretive analysis of the lived reality of the Leonese household, based on ethnographic data and on locally held notions of proper relations between kin, as embedded in stories people tell about family histories.*

INTRODUCTION

Two central approaches to the history of the family in Europe have crystallized over the past twenty years. The first, that of an historical demography school which emphasizes typologies of household structures and statistical studies of household types, is closely associated with the work of Peter

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Laslett and the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. The other approach is based in the work of historians who emphasize the search for attitudinal changes over time, and for a typology not of family structures, but of *mentalités.*

Peter Laslett revived an interest in the nineteenth-century investigations of Frédéric Le Play on the organization of the family. Le Play had established a typology of family structures, running from the patriarchal extended family to the stem family to the nuclear family. This typology was based on his conviction that the extended and stem families had been stable forms, socially, economically, and politically, while the nuclear familly was a dangerously unstable type that had developed with the rise of individualism and industrialization in Europe. While reviving Le Play's typology, Laslett and his followers have marshalled wide-ranging evidence to demonstrate that, long before the advent of industrialization, the nuclear family was the most common household type, rather than the "classical family of Western nostalgia," the extended family (Laslett 1972, p. 8; cf. Laslett and Wall 1972).

What we might call the *mentalité* school of family history began to take form in the 1970s, both as a reaction against the quantitative bent of historical demography, and as a reflection of the fact that the Western family was undergoing rapid change, even declining as an institution. To put the "decline" of the family in perspective, it was necessary to know what family life had really been like in the past. This led to other questions: when had the modern bourgeois family as we know it emerged; within which social strata had the family first become inward-turned; when and how had marriage become a product of romantic love, and children become not workers for the family but objects of altruistic affection (cf. Stone 1981)?

Among those who have written on the evolution of the modern middle-class family in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one can single out the works of Edward Shorter and Lawrence Stone. According to Shorter (1977), a progressive "sentimentalization" of family relations occurred first among the working classes who, being propertyless (and therefore not motivated by calculated interest), could give free rein to emotion. Stone (1979) locates a similar process of "sentimentalization" among the English bourgeoisie and gentry.

In contrast to the sentimentalized family relations of the working or middle classes, "'peasant' family relationships are regarded as mediated solely through such [calculated] interests: marriages are formed without regard to sentiment, and the ruling forces of parent/child relations are direct, tangible items of property." This critique is a quote from *Interest and Emotion* (1984, p. 10), a recent collection of essays edited by Hans Medick and David Warren Sabean on family and kinship that seek to bring together the approaches of social history and social anthropology. Medick and Sabean point out the fallacy of viewing emotions and interest as "opposites which cancel each other out" (1984, p. 10). The result of such an opposition is an evolutionary scheme which contrasts "much too easily a 'modern' emotional-laden nuclear family to 'traditional' family relations based on a different structure of motives altogether" (p.10). Instead, Medick and Sabean argue that "the practical experience of family life does not segregate the emotional and the material into separate spheres but is shaped by both at once, and they have to be grasped in their systematic interconnection" (p. 11).

Here we plan to follow Medick and Sabean for two purposes, the first of which is to understand the interpenetration of interest and emotion in the particular context of family relations in rural Leon. Second, we want to enlarge upon the structural scheme

of the nuclear family proposed by Laslett: to show how a family form apparently so universal must be understood within the local cultural/historical context that gives it meaning. Instead of maintaining the separation between the school of thought concerned with structure and that concerned with attitudes, our aim in this paper will be to attempt a synthesis of these perspectives. In the first part of the article we will treat the developmental cycle and household composition through time in a Leonese village. In the second part we will consider local attitudes towards the nature of house and family, moving thereby from an analysis of household structure to the lived and interpreted universe of village discourse about families.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL CYCLE IN SANTA MARÍA

Our focus here is on the village of Santa María del Monte, which is situated at the foot of the Cantabrian Mountains in the province of León. Santa María is a small agricultural village of 110 permanent residents, with an economy based on rye cultivation, some irrigated vegetable farming, and cattle-raising. The people are small landowners and, at least in the past, the village's considerable endowment of communal woods and meadows was an important supplement to their livelihood. Like much of Castile, León is eminently rural in its orientation, having remained on the margins of Spanish industrialization.

In Santa María, as in most of Spain, the predominant form of the rural family is nuclear, and partible inheritance is practiced, as has been the rule for several hundred years in León. This means that at the death of the parents the entire "house," which includes both landed property and moveables as well as the physical house, is divided equally among all the offspring, men and women. The original parental house thus undergoes a process of fission, as the different offspring form their own houses out of the pieces they acquire through inheritance and through purchase.

A central argument in the study of the history of the family in Europe concerns the role of inheritance and the distinction between partible and impartible inheritance. Impartible inheritance is viewed as linked with the stem family, lineage continuity, and extended family or household forms; partible or equal inheritance, with the nuclear family. The role of impartible inheritance in particular has come under much scrutiny — perhaps because of the prominence of the debate over the stem family, which Laslett has helped to revive. Equal inheritance systems have received far fewer studies — in part because we think we understand well enough how the nuclear family and equal inheritance operate and need not study them historically and ethnographically. We will try to show the equal inheritance system, and the family patterns related to it in León, are neither simple nor obvious.

Although partible inheritance/nuclear families and impartible inheritance/stem families are often seen in opposition to one another, in fact both systems have their moments of expansion and contraction. This becomes especially clear if we consider the developmental cycle of the family as it is affected by the process of inheritance and the unfolding of generations through time. Let us begin, then, by delineating the developmental cycle as it existed in Santa María from the turn of the century until around 1960-1975, the years of the rural exodus. Along the way we will point out some of the difficulties we encountered in using written documents to trace a history of the family development cycle and household structure in an area of equal inheritance.

In Santa María, as elsewhere in León, the family inheritance was rarely passed on while both parents were still alive, and marriage portions *(dote)* for both men and women

consisted of little more than a few clothes, some bedding, and perhaps a sheep or two (the dowry appears to have existed earlier, in the eighteenth century, but by the twentieth century it was no longer in use). The young married couple had little to start with — perhaps a loan in usufruct of a plot of land their parents let them work, and some sharecropping.

Setting up house became more difficult at the end of the nineteenth century, when the population began to double and even triple in size — as was occurring all over Spain and Europe. In Santa María the population grew from about 110 in 1810 — the same level it had been at since the first census of the town in 1597 — to about 280 by the end of the century. The pressure on the land caused by population growth was resolved, in Santa María, by turning to the commons, where villagers joined forces to clear land to expand the cultivated fields of the village. Thus such families survived, maintaining their identity as small landowners, rather than sinking to the level of the rural proletariat.

A common residence pattern during the early phase of marriage was for the husband and wife to live separately in each of their parental houses, continuing to work for their separate households while retaining a small portion to start up their own residences. This transitional phase could last for one or two years or for as long as eight or nine. Then, depending on circumstances, the couple would unite. Perhaps one would move in with the other — according to which of the two came from the "better" house — and coreside with that spouse's parents. Usually there was only one married couple united and living with one set of parents in one house at any given time; otherwise, our informants told us, the sisters-in-law might not get along. Alternatively, both husband and wife might move into an unused house, or portion of a house. Some people even built new houses, especially in the 1940s, extending what had been the fringes of the village. Fraternal houses were also common during the early phase of setting up house, with brothers and sisters setting up joint houses — a topic to which we will return.

The long, drawn-out process of forming a new household points to one of the first difficulties we find in calculating the village-wide household structure according to models such as that proposed by Laslett. Counting the number of different types of households in a village depends on first being able to decide whether a given group of people constitute a household, and that decision is typically related to finding a head (in relation to whom the household type is defined). This is, at least in theory, a simple and natural operation in studies of areas of impartible inheritance, where there is a clearly defined role of head and a clearly defined moment of succession; but in equal inheritance areas, these matters are not so clear. Elements of "household headship" that elsewhere are concentrated in a single person — for instance, the right to make key economic decisions, the right or duty to represent the house in the village polity — might instead be shared among various members of a house.

Such is the case in Santa María. Since both men and women inherit equally and retain their ownership of property after marriage, and since both husband and wife share in making basic decisions about the family economy, it is somewhat problematic to designate only the husband as the household head — in spite of the fact that men are generally thought of as holding ascendancy over women. At the very least we would have to describe the conjugal union as a power-sharing arrangement, with the husband usually as the senior partner. This situation becomes greatly complicated when a son of a *vecino,* or village citizen, marries. By the simple fact of being the son of a *vecino* and being married, he has automatically become eligible for gaining admission to the rank of *vecino* himself. Being a *vecino,* a member in

the village council, and thus a full participant in the village polity, is an essential characteristic of a household head. Indeed, one possible translation of *vecino* is "head of a household." But since, as we have noted, sons may remain in the parental house for some time after marrying, it is not infrequent to find more than one *vecino* in a given household.

When a son who has married and become a *vecino* continues to live in his parental house while his wife (with perhaps a child or two) lives in hers, the enumeration of households becomes even more complicated. Moreover, in such cases the son or daughter who remains in the house after marriage does so not with an eye to eventually inheriting the parental estate, but with the intention of working to build up enough capital of his or her own to become, in effect, independent of the parental house. The common Spanish proverb, *El casado, casa quiere* ("One who marries wants a house") is the key motif here: though still working and living within the parental household, the married offspring is also laboring — part time, so to speak — as the head of his or her own nascent house.

This is an ambiguity that listings and numerical studies can take account of only with great difficulty. In practice, such complicated household forms do not appear in the household lists we have of Santa María for this century (from 1920, 1945, and 1956). Where a newlywed husband and wife were living and working in their separate parental houses, the priest who compiled the lists, taking note of the fact the couple would soon be forming an independent household, listed them as heads of such a nuclear family. They would only figure as forming part of a joint household with one or another of their parents if the arrangement was of a more permanent sort, for instance, if they had both moved into the same household or if the parents were retired. Similarly, the conjugal units of fraternal households are always treated in the household lists discretely rather than as parts of complex joint houses with ambiguously intertwined household heads. As a result, we cannot know how common either fraternal household or divided newlywed houses were in the past. This is an inevitable drawback of any study of family patterns based exclusively on written records.

Once united, a couple formed a household by working bits of common lands, sharecropping, renting from older couples, and by working hard, saving, and buying property, thus accumulating *gananciales*. *Gananciales* are the property that husband and wife have acquired together through their work and earnings; they are the fruit of the marriage. After several years of struggle, with some purchased property to their credit, and a few offspring of their own, one of their parents dies, and a portion of inherited property is acquired.

There is a distrust of passing property on to the next generation *inter vivos*. Where this is done, there is usually a written contract drawn up specifying the parents' rights (what is owed to them as subsistence and care) till their death. Tales of old widows or widowers abandoned by their offspring after they have received the inheritance form a common motif in European folklore — it is the theme of a thirteenth-century English tale, *Handlyng Synne*, and of Zola's *La Terre*. So, in León, the inheritance is rarely passed on before at least one of the parents dies. At that point half the property goes to the widow or widower, the other half is split equally among all the offspring. Alternately, the surviving spouse can decide not to let the *gananciales* enter the division — there are a number of variations on how to divide the inheritance at this point in the cycle.

This is also another point in the developmental cycle — when the surviving parent has reached old age — at which a form of extended family typically resurfaces. The aged parent will generally move in again with one of his or her married offspring, often the youngest daughter (though there are many

variations) in return for granting that child the usufruct of the family lands while the parent remains alive. This household form actually became increasingly common in Santa María after about 1940, with the extension of life expectancy; even multiple family households, with both parents living to old age and retiring in the household of one of their offspring, became relatively common.

Once both parents are dead, all of the property is divided equally among the offspring — including the house, the land, the crops, the harvest in the fields and in the grain bins, the animals, the utensils. Thus even if one of the heirs has been working the parental fields, the crops will still be divided exactly evenly, as will the sausage from the family pig and the honey from the family honeycombs — for foodstuffs are viewed as pertaining to all family members, none of whom should be denied subsistence. The rest of the property is divided into roughly equivalent portions and then usually dealt out by lot. There is an interest in making the portions equitable, if not equal, since no one knows which lot will fall to him or her. While there is a certain amount of rational will used to make each lot equally desirable, the ultimate choice is left to chance. At times this arrangement works out all to the best (Behar 1986, pp. 68-88); but often enough, hard feelings between siblings can result from the luck of the draw (Brandes 1975, pp. 122-123).

It is important to correct the image of partible inheritance as leading to the absurd fractioning of estates. An estate in a village such as Santa María usually consists of many small fields to begin with, and when the time comes to partition the land among heirs these fields are dealt out more than split up. Although a particular plot may be divided into two or three portions, it is never partitioned to the point where it would be agriculturally useless to everyone.

With the death of all four parents, the couple has all its inheritance; and with this, and their *genanciales* — built up by their own labor and that of their children — they have completely reconstituted the household. More exactly, they have constituted an entirely new one, for each of their siblings has probably constituted a new household as well. About this time, one of their children will probably be marrying and starting the cycle anew.

HOUSEHOLD TYPES AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION THROUGH TIME

Interestingly, we find extended and multiple family households cropping up at various phases in the developmental cycle of the family within a system of equal inheritance; this, despite the fact that the most typical household form is the simple, nuclear family. First, as the family is beginning, it goes through a "setting-up" period that may last months or years, when the couple may work in separate parental houses at first, then unite in one or the other parental house; then, perhaps, join a fraternal household, which also may last for months or years. It is only after the fortunes of the new family are established that it becomes an independent household, and this nuclear phase might also be interrupted should the elderly parent or parents of one of the spouses retire and join them. Afterwards, the children of the young couple will begin to marry, and one or another of them may remain in the household for a while with spouse and children. Finally, the couple will reach old age themselves and may retire into the household of one of their own offspring.

Here we have been presenting the family development cycle as a kind of atemporal structure, as if it has always been repeated endlessly in just the same way. But family development occurs through time, so we might well imagine that the events of local history, such as the population growth at the end of the nineteenth century, will affect the way that the developmental cycle unfolds at

different historical moments. And, through its effect on the way families develop, local history will also influence the overall distribution of household types in a village — since these are, essentially, snapshots of domestic groups at different phases of the developmental cycle.

Three times in this century, the parish priest of Santa María composed household lists *(libros de feligresía),* which give the name, marital status, age, and place of birth (if not born in Santa María itself) of all the members of each family residing in the village. We have checked and corrected the data given in these lists against the parish vital registers, and have found that they are generally quite accurate. As noted above, there are certain multiple-family household types that are too ambiguous to fit into any listmaker's set categories; these types, the fraternal household and household arrangements of newlyweds, can only be made visible through the method of oral history, and will be treated extensively later in this paper.

In spite of such drawbacks, the parish lists of 1920, 1945, and 1956 do provide us with a general sense of the distribution of household types over a period in which Santa María was undergoing important social, economic, and demographic changes. For comparison we are also including the data from a household survey which we conducted in 1978, after the rural exodus, as well as composite data on the distribution of household types in fourteen villages surrounding Santa María in 1752. The categories which appear in our analysis of these household lists (see Table 1) follow Peter Laslett's (1972) scheme.

The most striking pattern that emerges is the preponderance of the simple family — precisely as one would expect in an equal inheritance area. Once again we must point out that at least a handful of these nuclear families were in fact parts of fraternal household arrangements or households extended by the presence of newlyweds. The point is that, due to the relatively loose organization of such arrangements, they can appear to be either fully formed multiple family households or linked, yet separate, simple families that coreside in a single house. But what calls for explanation in this table is the variation in categories other than that of the simple family household.

In 1920, one in ten households was made up of multiple family units (more than one married couple), and slightly more than that were extended households, usually a widow or widower with a married child. By 1945, 10% of households were still extended, but no multiple families remained at all. And eleven years later, in 1956, there were once more a handful of multiple families (3%), while the number of extended households had more than doubled, to 23%. What these figures capture are different moments in the developmental cycle of particular cohorts of villagers.

The extended and multiple families that we find in the 1920 list consist almost exclusively of young married couples still unestablished and living in a parental household. In 1945, by contrast, the young couples of a generation before have become long established, and their own children, those born in the years 1910-1920, have seen action in the Civil War, traveled through Spain, and have returned to marry and set up their own households. In 1920 the village was nearing the end of its period of expansion, and there were more married couples than ever before, yet the number of houses in which to live had not grown in some years. Twenty-five years later, as we know from interviews, the members of a new and more worldly generation felt it was time to build their own houses, and they did so soon after marrying as their resources allowed.

The result was that a number of new houses were constructed in the years immediately following the Civil War. The number of multiple family households then decreased while the number of simple families rose.

Table 1.

Distribution of Household Types in Santa María del Monte.[a]

	1752		1920		1945		1956		1978	
Household type:	*number*	*percent*	*number*	*percent*	*number*	*percent*	*number*	*percent*	*number*	*percent*
1 (solitaries)	40	12.2	2	3.3	3	4.4	0	0.0	2	4.8
2 (no conjugal unit)	6	1.8	2	3.3	1	1.5	1	1.4	2	4.8
3 (simple families)	261	79.6	42	70.0	57	83.8	51	72.9	34	81.0
4 (extended families)	19	5.8	8	13.3	7	10.3	16	22.9	2	4.8
5 (multiple familes)	2	0.6	6	10.0	0	0.0	2	2.9	2	4.8
Total	328	100.0	60	100.0	68	100.0	70	100.0	42	100.0
Population	1389		285		293		316		114	
Mean household size	4.2		4.8		4.3		4.5		2.7	
Generations per household:										
1 generation	77	23.5	7	11.7	16	23.5	6	8.6	22	52.4
2 generations	238	72.6	44	73.3	46	67.6	51	72.9	18	42.9
3 generations	13	4.0	9	15.0	6	8.8	13	18.6	2	4.8

Notes: a. Data from 1752 are from fourteen villages surrounding Santa María. No data on household structure from Santa María itself survive from that period.

Sources: Archivo Histórico Provincial de León, Marqués de la Ensenada; Archivo Parroquial de Santa María del Monte, Libros de bautizados, Libros de casados, Libros de difuntos and Libros de feligresía.

Many of these simple families (twelve out of fifty-seven) consisted of recently married couples who had not yet had children, which explains the unusually high percentage of single-generation households in the 1945 list. By 1956, the large marriage cohort of the early 1940s had become fully established, though their children were not yet old enough to marry and create multiple family households. On the other hand, the parents of this cohort — the young couples of 1920 — were now reaching old age, and many of them, especially those who had become widowed, had already retired into the households of their offspring. These are the extended families that we find here.

Looking ahead to 1978, the effects of the rural exodus that began in the late 1950s and carried through to the mid 1970s are readily apparent in the dramatic drop in mean household size and the extremely large number of single-generation households. The young couples of the 1940s have, by and large, remained in the village; most of their parents have died, however, and so the number of extended and multiple family households has declined. And their children, almost all of them, have left. The number of couples living in the village without children has jumped to nineteen, up from five in 1956 and twelve in 1945. But whereas, in the earlier years, the childless couples were newlyweds who had not yet had children, now they are couples whose children have grown up and departed.

Finally, the eighteenth-century figures — which, we must emphasize, are composite figures and not strictly comparable with our twentieth-century samples — show nonetheless a striking resemblance in their general pattern to the more recent data. Again, simple families and two-generational households are in a clear majority. The number of solitaries (and thus of single-generation households) is out of proportion with the later figures, though, and there is a noticeably smaller number of extended and multiple family households. Whereas these differences might be somehow a result of the different methods used by the list compilers in the eighteenth and twentieth century, they do resonate with other things we know about the changing demography of Santa María.

Life expectancy was probably shorter in the eighteenth century, so there were fewer elderly parents to care for. Indeed, death rates only began to fall in Santa Maria around 1920, so it is only in the 1940s and 1950s that we begin to see significant numbers of retired parents living with their children. Also, men and women tended to marry at a later age in the eighteenth century, when the median age for first marriage for men was 27; a century later, it had fallen to 24. Since half of the solitaries in the 1752 sample were young men who had not yet married (whereas in the later figures, all solitaries are older widows or widowers), there is a hint that at that time men often waited until the death of their parents before marrying.[1] This would have amounted to an alternative method of setting up house, by waiting for the inheritance rather than by working in the parental household and in fraternal households to build up *gananciales*. Such an inheritance strategy, if it was typical of eighteenth-century rural León, had disappeared by the early twentieth century. The question is, why?

The answer probably lies in the expansion of the population during the nineteenth century. Our informants in Santa María were unanimous in insisting that a newlywed couple could only establish their household through their own hard work, by buying fields, and clearing communal woodlands; the parental inheritance would be too little to live on by the time it was divided among all the heirs, and would come too late. To see how these perceptions might have been prompted by the population expansion that reached its peak while our now-retired informants were growing up, let us look at the demographic components of that expansion.

Table 2
Mortality, Natality, and Net Migration Rates for Santa María: 1739-1978.

Period	*Average population during period*	*Mortality (deaths per 1000 per year)*	*Natality (births per 1000 per year)*	*Estimated rate of net out-migration (per 1000 per year*
1739-1809	120	33	43	10
1810-1887	183	33	45	0.9
1888-1920	278	31	41	8.5
1921-1956	297	15	30	12
1957-1978	188	12	16	53

Source: Archivo Parroquial de Santa María del Monte, Libros de bautizados and Libros de difuntos; for population sources, see Behar 1986:28.

The crude mortality and natality rates for Santa María fall into two well-defined periods between 1739 (the date of the first eighteenth-century population count of the village, from which we can calculate the rates) and 1978. The early period, from 1739 to 1920, is defined by the high birth and death rates typical of the old regime: around 40 to 45 for births, and 30 to 35 for deaths. The later period is marked by rapidly falling rates of both fertility and mortality.

By taking the difference between the numbers of births and deaths recorded in the parish archives over the same span of time and comparing this with the actual change in population recorded in various head-counts and censuses, we have also estimated the rate of net out-migration over the years 1739 to 1978. We have found that this rate falls into four periods, which do not coincide with the periods just mentioned: a moderate rate during the eighteenth century (up to 1809); markedly lower out-migration during the period of population growth (1810-1887); a second period of moderate out-migration, at a time when the population stabilized and grew slowly (1888-1956); and a period of rapid rural exodus (1957-1978). The average rates for mortality, natality, and out-migration over these periods are presented in Table 2.

The implication of these rates is that changes in natality or mortality had little to do with the growth of population in Santa María in the nineteenth century. Rather, the village grew because the moderate but steady out-migration that had held the population in check through the eighteenth-century suddenly slowed to an insigificant trickle. It is interesting to speculate why the out-migration decreased.[2] It must have suddenly seemed more attractive to remain in the village than to leave it, but we can only guess whether this was because of external forces — perhaps the loss of the American colonies in the 1820s was a factor — or because of an internal change, such as the introduction of the potato in Santa María and surrounding villages in the early nineteenth century. More significant for the present subject than why out-migration slowed, however, is the fact that it had played such an important part in keeping the population in balance in the earlier period.

The role of an impartible inheritance system in promoting village out-migration has frequently been noted. If only one child receives enough land to work, the reasoning goes, the other offspring will either have to find another heir to marry, or emigrate. That

equal inheritance should also result in out-migration seems counterintuitive: "perfect partibility should lead to a high proportion of nuclear family households, high nuptiality, and low emigration" (Berkner and Mendels 1983, p. 213), since each offspring will receive an equal mount of land and will thus have an equal incentive to stay. But in central León, where perfect partibility has long been the actual practice, children did not expect to receive their inheritance before the death of their parents. This being the case, a young person was unlikely to base his or her decision about staying in the village on the hope of one day getting but a piece of the family estate.

Out-migration in fact played an important part in the way the equal inheritance system worked in the eighteenth century. Since the house — in the broadest sense, including both the physical house and the fields that sustain it — was divided equally among a number of heirs, those who remained in the village faced the tasks of acquiring enough fields to work and, just as importantly, of reuniting enough of the shares of the physical house to shelter their families (Behar 1986, p. 54). We will consider below some of the mechanics of reuniting a house in the twentieth century. Eighteenth-century provincial notarial records in León attest to a lively network of trading pieces of houses in that epoch, and it seems that the constant stream of out-migrants in villages such as Santa María assured that such pieces — a room here, a sheepfold there — were always available for sale. By the same token, those who left Santa María were likely to sell off the fields that they eventually inherited, or at least to rent them to a villager who had stayed behind.

In the nineteenth-century, then, the lack of out-migration must have meant a shrinking of the number of fields and pieces of houses that were coming up for sale, though it was not until the population had about doubled that this change began to be felt as a hardship. By 1869 the villagers of Santa María found it necessary to make up for the lack of arable land by breaking up a portion of their common woodland, "due to the fact that in this our village the number of *vecinos* has increased and on the contrary there are many *vecinos* short of land to sow to support their families" (Behar 1986, p. 230). It was during the latter part of the nineteenth century, then, that the inheritance strategies remembered by our informants as typical became entrenched. When no old arable fields were coming up for sale, and newlywed couples had to work to build up *gananciales* in order to survive, whether or not they had inherited a part of their parents' estate, there was no longer any point in adopting the eighteenth-century strategy of waiting to marry until the inheritance had been passed on.

It was probably also in the nineteenth-century that it became common for two or more households to coexist, at times uneasily, in the confines of a single physical house — a pattern which continued up to the 1950s — since it was less common than earlier for pieces of houses to be sold or traded. In the family inheritance documents of this period we often find families living in a reduced portion of a house, such as the front or the back rooms, and we find heirs especially reluctant to relinquish their rights to a piece of their parental house. Though village out-migration returned to its eighteenth-century level by the late 1880s, the inheritance strategies and patterns of household formation that had come about by then persisted well into the twentieth century.

FRATERNAL HOUSEHOLDS

Let us now turn from this discussion of the developmental cycle and household distribution to actual examples of sibling and parent/child relations. So far we have been laying the historical groundwork for a discussion of the Leonese understanding of house and family, and of the concerns raised by Medick and Sabean. In what follows, we will first consider fraternal households, moving to an analysis

of sibling relations, parent/child, and husband/wife relations. Finally, we will recount a few locally told stories that get at the heart of the intertwining of interest and emotion in Leonese family relations.

Our first example of a fraternal household is that of Felicísimo and Nicanor, brothers, who married sisters, Gerónima and Victoria, in 1940. Felicísimo and Nicanor were the only children of their mother's first marriage, and they had already inherited their father's part of the inheritance when they married. They decided not to split up this inheritance, but to work it together, and they set up a joint household with their wives that last for the first ten years or so of their marriages. Felicísimo was a shepherd and so brought a money income into the joint house, while Nicanor and his wife worked the fields and Gerónima took care of all the children. Both couples kept a common kitchen and a common purse. When they decided to form separate households, they bought an old house and renovated it, as well as the house they had all been living in; then they drew lots to split up the dwellings and fields. Nicanor called it a division *como buenos hermanos* — "like good brothers."

To complicate the kinship links within this family further, Felicísimo and Nicanor's half-sisters, by their mother's second marriage, married Gerónima and Victoria's younger brothers, in 1946 and 1953 respectively. The first couple to marry lived in their separate parental houses for the first eight years of their marriage. When the second couple married they all formed a joint fraternal household. To this day, these two couples continue to do much agricultural and domestic work in common. All four couples sometimes exchange mutual labor for annual pig slaughters and other labor-intensive tasks.

This marriage of brothers and sisters can perhaps be viewed as a particular type of marriage "strategy" especially well-adapted to avoiding the dispersion of the family property through partible inheritance. But it also seems to be indicative of a particular reality of Leonese family relations: namely, that as first the fraternal bond is stronger than the still fragile marriage link. The fraternal household is a way of building up the house, of forging a stronger marital link.

Ordinarily, with time, the marital link should grow stronger than the fraternal, except in the case when a couple is childless. Then the fraternal links — both in terms of house and property — tend to remain stronger, so that the marriage is almost eclipsed as a bond. A good example of this is the case of Cornelio and Sixto, an older and younger brother now retired, who have worked together since the death of their mother in 1948. Both brothers, with their wives, lived in their parental house after marriage, until Inés, the wife of Sixto, inherited her mother's house in 1966, along with the charge of caring for a slightly retarded brother. The work arrangement between the brothers continues — and their property has remained undivided — since Sixto and Inés have no children. Inés, meanwhile, works with a sister whose husband died of cancer several years ago. They told us that, at their deaths, all of Sixto's inherited property will go to Cornelio's children, all of Inés' to her sister's children. This reflects the idea that the inherited property, if not the *gananciales,* should remain in the family trunk. The continuation of the fraternal arrangement with Cornelio and Sixto, and with Inés and her sister, is thus a way of keeping the kinship link alive, a means of attaching each spouse to the fruitful lines of each of their families. In families without children, marriage is indeed a fragile link.

In the family group that works the greatest number of fields in Santa María today, elements of both of these cases — brother and sister marriage, as well as the grafting of infertile kin into the lineage — can be seen. In this case, we have two brothers married to

two sisters, and both the brothers and sisters each have an unwed brother. The older couple, Teógenes and Emilia, do not have children, while the younger couple, Arístides and Vicenta, do. Emilia lives in the house of Teógenes, Arístedes, and their unmarried brother, while Vicenta and her children live in her parental house with her unmarried brother. All these family members work together with a good deal of machinery, which they co-own; they cultivate both their own inherited property, which has remained undivided, and they rent out estates from retired villagers; their considerable herd of cattle are taken out to pasture in a common herd. Emilia, who has a bad back, takes care of her sister's children while her sister works in the fields; she has, in fact, practically raised the children, having none of her own. There is a complex relation of sharing work, responsibilities, and kinship bonds in this double household.

This village pattern of fraternal work, if not of residence, has also been transposed to the urban setting since the rural exodus. One among several cases is that of the children of Lautico and Julita, all six of whom own "shares" of a bar in Madrid, which is worked together by four of the siblings, while the older two have stayed in the village to manage the family property.[3]

Sibling Relations

We have seen in these examples that sibling relations can tend towards unity. Overall, there is more harmony in such relations than one might expect. People in Santa María are socialized into thinking in terms of receiving parts of a whole rather than of grabbing the whole thing — socialized both by the inheritance system and by the system of common lands, of which each village household is always entitled to no more than a part or a share. Whether of the family or the community pie, the individual only gets a part; such is the sense of equity that is so prevalent in northern Spanish villages.

But, on the other hand, sibling relations can also tend towards conflict and to the nuclearization of the family. A poignant case of such conflict took place between two families concerning the division of the parental house. It centered on the clash between Basilio, who was living in his mother's house with his wife and small daughters, and Marina, his sister-in-law, who was the widow of Basilio's brother Elviro, and who had recently remarried another brother of his, mild-mannered Virgilio.

The poignancy of this conflict lies in the fact that it occurred just a few years after Basilio and his sister-in-law had been brought together by a terrible incident that befell her when she was married to Elviro. In 1945, just after the Civil War, a time of great scarcity and hunger, Elviro was returning home from a neighboring village on his burro with a sack of freshly-milled wheat. It so happened that his cousins, Nati and Evarista, had just noticed that some grain was missing from their bins, and seeing Elviro they assumed he had stolen it. (That they could think this of their own first cousin says something about the depth of conflict possible among cousins.) Nati and Evarista took their accusation to the Civil Guards, who went to Marina's house and beat Elviro and her father since neither would confess to having stolen the wheat; this occurred on the very day that Marina was giving birth to their second child. After this incident, according to Marina, Elviro felt ashamed to leave the house, became ill, and died shortly thereafter.

To this day neither Marina and her family nor Basilio and his family have anything to do with Nati and Evarista and their families. On one occasion, shortly after we arrived in Santa María, we were playing with a young grandchild of Evarista, and Basilio told us, without hiding his disgust very well, to stop paying so much attention to that child; it was only much later that we learned the reason for his hatred. The feud has survived, and it

is part of the family history behind the current factionalism in the village.

Yet, though Basilio and Marina are on the same side where village factionalism is concerned, they were not on speaking terms for several years, and relations between their families have remained cool. Shortly after Elviro's death, Basilio brought up the question of making a final division of his mother's house, where, as we noted, he and his family were living. At the time, his mother herself did not own the entire house; the entrance, portal, and sheepfold belonged to two nephews, Basilio's cousins, Felicísimo and Nicanor, whom we encountered before, married to sisters. The back part of the house, where the bread oven was located, belonged to an uncle of Basilio. These were shares that had been acquired from an earlier division in 1918 after the death of Basilio's father's parents.

Basilio succeeded in buying the share that belonged to Felicísimo and Nicanor, and he wanted to buy out the other shares as well: that of Marina, as the widow of Elviro; that of her second husband, his brother Virgilio; and that of the widow of another brother who had gone to live in a mountain village. The widow in the mountains agreed to the idea of receiving a settlement in money for the portions of the house she was entitled to, as did Basilio's brother Virgilio.

But Marina refused to accept money; she insisted on being given a "piece of the house" for the children born of her deceased husband, Elviro. She was adamant, and because of her the division of the house dragged on for several years. Basilio and his wife thought Marina was being especially unfair because she herself was an only child, who had been raised by her father, and would eventually inherit all of his lands and the house in which she was living. Why, then, did she need a "piece" of their house? Marina, however, saw things differently. For her, it was crucial that her two young children inherit a piece of their paternal house — as if this would tangibly link them back into their father's blood and being. Her attachment to this piece of the house was a reflection of attitudes towards inheritance that had developed in the nineteenth century during the era of population growth.

The long quarrel was finally settled in Basilio's favor — but the hatred persisted. This conflict led to a complete rupture in relations, as if the kinship tie had been broken. To our surprise, for example, we discovered one day that Basilio's youngest son, then fifteen, had not even been aware that his father had a brother, Marina's second husband. A lot of emotion goes into the division of the actual house, as if that is the central core of the parental inheritance, more so than even the lands. On the other hand, siblings usually work things out through partial division of the house, where one or two siblings may receive portions of it, and the rest will accept a settlement in money.

This was a fairly unusual example. But it does point to the kind of nuclearization of the family that commonly occurs through the process of equal inheritance. A more frequent source of fraternal conflict centers around the fact that one child usually is expected to take care of the surviving parent or parents in old age. Usually this task is entrusted to the youngest daughter, but there are variations; as we just saw, for lack of daughters, Basilio had stayed behind in his mother's house to take care of her. Everyone agrees that it is best for the elderly parent to be in the care of one child, and that this child should be favored in the inheritance with just a little bit more than the other siblings, whether it be with the house itself, a larger portion of it, or an extra plot of land. Yet, favoring one child over the others runs counter to the spirit of equality — especially as viewed by the siblings.

Thus, in the case of Nora, who took care of her mother for the last twenty years of her life, her siblings were extremely angry when she was rewarded for her labor with the gift of the parental house in a last will and

testament. It seemed to them that she should have gotten a larger portion of the house and that the others should have gotten at least a portion in money. And it was especially irritating to the siblings that Nora and her husband, being childless, should have gotten the house; for it will be lost to the line at their death.

In another case, an old widow, Filomena, is passed around between her three offspring like a hot potato because she *refuses* to favor one child over the others. Her only daughter does not want to be the one to care for her exclusively because she knows that she will not be given anything special for her labors at her mother's death. Even a son that Filomena has in Switzerland, who does not participate at all in the care of his mother, Filomena says will receive his equal share of the inheritance because he is, after all, a son. Village people tell her to promise to give her daughter her now-abandoned house in the village, so she can be better cared for; but Filomena refuses, and so spends four months with each child in rotation, paying for her keep with her pension.

PARENT AND CHILD RELATIONS

With the case of Filomena, we can move to the question of parent and child relations. As we noted, it is very rare for the inheritance to be passed on to the next generation until one or both parents die. There is a popular saying: *Los suegros son como las patatas, no dan fruto hasta que están bajo tierra* ("Parents-in-law are like potatoes; they don't give fruit until they're under ground"). The use of "parents-in-law" here rather than "parents" is politely euphemistic; clearly the parents, too, must die before they can bear fruit for their children and their children's children.

This practice of late transmission reveals a certain mistrust of children — whether or not they will really take care of you in old age once you are no longer master of house and land. In the Leonese setting, it is also true that there was not much property in any case, and the parents, in the days before social security, needed the inheritance themselves to live on. Thus people could not count too much on the family property when they built up their own households, and young couples had to remain connected to their parental houses before they could accumulate the means to separate and form their own. Especially by the end of the nineteenth century, with population growth and unprecedented pressure on the land, people depended even less on the family property, and much more on their shares of common property, and on their own hard work and savings. Up until the 1950s and 1960s, the decades preceding the rural exodus, these communal shares were like "gold dust," in the words of one informant.

Thus parents, no less than children, had to watch out for their own interests, a point that is well made in the story of Filomena, as it was told one autumn day by two village women. As we noted, Filomena is passed around from one offspring to another and she pays her keep when she is in their care — a situation that most villagers find deplorable. Before the offspring worked out this system of rotation, Filomena had been in the care of her only daughter, but the two had not gotten along. Things became so bad between them that Filomena's daughter refused to wash her mother's clothes in her washing machine, forcing Filomena to do her laundry outdoors in the public fountains despite her rheumatism. It was known that Filomena had to cook her own food on the woodstove, while her daughter used a gas one — and rumor had it that her daughter only swept half of the kitchen floor, leaving the rest for her mother to sweep.

When asked what Filomena had done to deserve such terrible treatment from her daughter and her three sons, our storytellers replied that she had always been very set in her ways. And they had to admit that

Filomena herself had not been very good to her own parents or her in-laws. It was especially her failure as a daughter-in-law that our storytellers underlined, and wove into a tale about inheritance — not of property or material goods, however, but of a profound moral failing at the root of the family.

As they pointed out, the pattern of discord between Filomena and her children had a precedent in the treatment of Filomena's father-in-law by his children. He had given them his land to work, because he was old and could no longer work them himself. For this he had expected to receive in return a fixed share of the harvest for his own support, as was customary. But his children refused to give him anything. He then took them to court in the hope of settling the matter. Nothing more came of his efforts, though, because his children claimed that the agreement to work their father's lands was only verbal, and therefore they owed him nothing.

Later on, Filomena and her husband lived with her old parents-in-law in their house. By this time the old man was sick in bed, though no one knew what ailed him. After the dispute with his children, Josefa, one of our storytellers, and her husband, Lorenzo, worked the old man's lands and paid him a proper rent. On one visit, Lorenzo was shown his illness by the old man. He had cancer, as Josefa put it, "in his parts" *(en sus partes).* There was no remedy for it, as Lorenzo had found out from the doctor, who said that nothing remained to be done but to keep the man clean and comfortable.

But even this elementary kindness was not carried out by Filomena. When her father-in-law passed away, her neglect became evident to the entire village. Village women came to shroud the body and found "fly shit, maggots, in his parts," according to Marina, our other storyteller. His sore was breeding maggots, that's how filthy he was, Marina said, summing up the story like this: "good goes far, evil farther" *(el bien vuela, el mal trasvuela).* There is a cruel but poetic justice in the mistreatment of Filomena by her children; as our storytellers put it, "this already comes from before" *(eso ya viene de antes).*

The tale revolves around the question: what do children owe to their parents and, by extension, to their parents-in-law? In the story told here, it is clear that the offspring feel they owe nothing: this was no less true, as we saw, of Filomena than of her own children. In the view of the women telling the story, it is precisely the lack of a sense of moral indebtedness that is at the root of the sickness in that family. Filomena's egotism and neglect of her father-in-law is repaid in kind by her children when she herself reaches old age — what she gave is exactly what she receives. Thus people will often speak of a family in which parents and children alike are mean and selfish as being *de mala raza,* literally of a bad race or caste. In other words, family character is itself viewed as an inherited trait.

Out of this family history our storytellers wove a cautionary tale of what happens when family relations are based solely on self-interest, when there is no mediation whatsoever of kinship ideals of reciprocity and help freely given to one's parents or in-laws in old age. If, on the one hand, parents and in-laws are approached sardonically in the simile about how they don't give fruit until they're under ground, on the other, woe to the children who treat their parents so coldly in practice! Woe to the children who are all interest and no emotion!

HUSBAND AND WIFE RELATIONS AND NOTIONS OF HEALTHY PROGENY

Notions of health in family relations focus not only on the link between parents and children, but also on that between husband and wife. Cautionary tales likewise tend to be woven around the nexus of husband and wife

relations, pointing to the dangers of forging this bond solely on the basis of interest. We were told one such story by Herminia and Basilio, who we earlier met in the conflict over the division of the parental house, and heard similar ones over the course of our stay about the dangers of marriages of convenience — marriages arranged for the sake of property rather than because of mutual affection and understanding.

In telling her tale, Herminia told two marriage stories — the story of her parents', a second marriage for both, and the story of her half-brother's marriage to a woman to whom he was not attracted. Her parents had been *novios,* boyfriend and girlfriend, but had broken off because of an argument. Each married someone else, and her mother moved with her first husband to nearby Barrillos. Each had children and after several years both their spouses died. Herminia's mother came back to Santa María to live, and widower and widow again renewed their relationship. As Herminia put it, *se entendieron,* "they understood each other." Her parents were wed in 1920, and from then on had a very happy marriage. In describing her parents' relationship she did not use the bourgeois sentimentalizing language of love — a language we found to be generally missing from the peasant setting of Santa María — employing instead the notion of "understanding" to highlight the importance of a link beyond interest in marriage.

Immediately after, Herminia went on to tell the story of her half-brother Atilano's marriage to Fuencisla. Atilano had been raised by an aunt since he was just two years old when his mother died in 1915. As a young man, Atilano began courting Placidia, and the two of them were *novios* for several years. But Atilano's aunt disapproved of the courship, and pushed instead for Atilano to marry Fuencisla, as did Atilano's father and Fuencisla's parents. Now, Fuencisla's parents were well off: as Herminia and Basilio both commented, they owned four cows at a time when everyone else had only two at most. Curiously, neither Atilano nor Fuencisla protested the marriage that had been arranged for them. Herminia noted that Fuencisla was the sort of woman who accepted things passively; another woman in her place would have protested that she would marry whom she pleased. When the two got married in 1939, Atilano's former *novia,* Placidia, hurled curses at Fuencisla *(le dijo maldiciones),* and soon afterwards left the village. Atilano and Fuencisla's first child was born and died after ten days; the second child was born with Down's syndrome — this child survived into adulthood and, in Herminia's account, there were others who followed in succession, all with Down's syndrome, who did not survive childhood. Only their last two surviving children were born without birth defects. This was a very sad state of affairs for both husband and wife, and Herminia said that Atilano greatly regretted the marriage, with its sick progeny. Atilano died fairly young, of cancer. Basilio commented on this family history by saying: "It was as if sent by God, because Atilano loved Placidia and the parents came and separated them. That wasn't right."

By telling both stories in succession, opposing them to each other, Herminia and Basilio created a tale that was a kind of meditation on the theme of sentiment in marriage. In León there is a sense that through marriage a couple produces property — the *gananciales* we spoke of earlier — which both husband and wife own and exercise rights over; most of a couple's lands in this century were *gananciales,* because the inheritance had been greatly diminished with population growth. Here Herminia and Basilio were pointing to the production in marriage, not of property but of progeny, and the idea that some sentiment or "undersanding" has to be at its base for its progeny to be healthy.[4]

PROPERTY, PROGENY, AND EMOTION: SOME CONCLUSIONS

Thus emotion has played a part in peasant property arrangements at least since the beginning of this century. The emotion that is present is not simply a product of a "trickle down" effect from middle-class attitudes towards romance that we might find in the Spanish urban context. What we find in Santa María, instead, is a certain sense of emotional reciprocity as the basis for health in family relations — whether in sibling relations, parent/child relations, or husband/wife relations. In the case of Filomena and her offspring, we find the notion of a cancerous moral relation, a fundamental lack of reciprocity, between parents and children that can be passed down from generation to generation along with the house and the fields. In the case we just examined of the marriage of Atilano and Fuencisla, there is a danger in arranged marriages: progeny not created from some emotional bond of understanding runs the risk of being unhealthy; such is the subversion of letting property come before emotion. Thus, along with a concept of moral and physical health in family relations, there is the notion of progeny as affected by the emotional/moral history of parent-and-child or husband-and-wife relations.

We spoke at length of fraternal houses, in order to point out the notions of reciprocity, cooperation, and sharing that can exist in sibling relations — the ideal of being "buenos hermanos." Partible inheritance, to some, gives the impression that siblings spend all their time struggling for every last bit of property; but fraternity is indeed often possible. Of course there also is conflict, as we tried to show in the confrontation between Basilio and Marina for rights to the parental house. But, even where there is conflict, emotions, in the sense of sentiments not directly emanating from calculated interest, are involved. In Marina's case, the key issue was the house in a symbolic sense, notions of paternity, continuity of the line, securing a piece of the father's house for her orphaned children. Basilio and his wife, on the other hand, saw a basic lack of fairness in Marina's stubborn request for her children's piece of the house, an attempt to take away a house in which they had already made an emotional and economic investment.

In conclusion, our aim here has been to consider, from historical, demographic, and anthropological points of view, the "nuclear family" under partible inheritance in a particular Spanish peasant context. We have shown that the nuclear family is not the only form the household takes even in areas where partible inheritance predominates. There are points in the family cycle when the household expands, as when newlyweds continue to live and work with each set of parents for several years until they are able to establish their own independent households, or when siblings form joint households for a certain time or even maintain them on a permanent basis.

Although the nuclear family is both the ideal and the practical type in rural León, simply noting this is not particularly enlightening. What we have tried to do is to show the significance of relations within and between families. We have suggested the need to see the local manifestation of the nuclear family form: what shape it takes, what kinds of conflicts and reciprocities are possible between kin, how it works in the local society at one or several points in historical time. Ideally, it should be possible to study in this way variations in the nuclear family from class to class, society to society, and from historical moment to historical moment.

With respect to the history of changes in attitude within and towards the family — as we find in the works of Shorter and Stone —, we have tried to show that we should not be deceived by the fact that we do not find a sentimentalizing language in peasant contexts like the Leonese, even in the present day. Though a sentimentalizing language is

not used, we clearly see in the stories that people tell about families that mutual understanding, bonds of emotion, reciprocity, and fraternity are as important as — and thoroughly intertwined with — "rational" self-interest. This is not a new idea: Marcel Mauss characterized the gift as a hybrid of interest and altruism. The point is still to put this idea into a local context — into a context, as we did here, of village discourse. By looking closely at the stories people tell about particular family histories one can get at a local discourse about kinship and family, and thereby arrive at a culturally grounded perspective on the question of "family history."

Finally, in pursuing a dialogue first with Laslett and then with Shorter and Stone, we have sought to show that their approaches are not mutually incompatible, and that, in the peasant context, they should, indeed, be combined in order to fully understand the nature of house and family. The demographic and historical analysis of the family cycle and household distribution through time is an essential substratum from which to build toward an interpretation of local attitudes and discourse about families. With this combination of viewpoints, looking at peasant family relations both from afar and at close range, the entire picture comes into more acute focus.

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NOTES

1. The pattern of waiting until one's parents died before marrying probably continued for some time into the nineteenth century, just as patterns that developed in the late nineteenth century continued almost to the present. For an example from the 1830s of a son who remained unmarried and worked his mother's lands while she lived, then married shortly after her death, see Behar (1986, p. 103).

2. It is also interesting to speculate on where the out-migrants went. Many of those who left in the eighteenth century were simply marrying into other villages in the area, but at the same time many others were marrying in. The city in León was not growing at that time (its population was 6000 at the close of the century), nor were other villages in the area. Thus many out-migrants must have been leaving for other parts, perhaps Madrid, or even the New World. We know that by the beginning of this century there was some migration to Argentina and Mexico, as well as to Madrid. Those who left in the recent rural exodus went mainly to the industrial centers of Madrid and the Basque country as well as to the city of León, whose population has grown from 15,000 in 1900 to over 200,000 at present.

3. Though it is difficult to find examples of such forms as the fraternal joint household in historical documents, they do appear from time to time in inheritance records. For a case from 1858, involving three brothers who owned team animals in common, see Behar (1986, pp. 109-110).

4. In the only other case in Santa María where offspring were born with severe congenital disease — in that case, crippling muscular dystrophy that plagued all but two of the children — the union of husband and wife was also arranged. This, too, was a union that had seemed economically shrewd because the husband was an only child with a good inheritance. But not only were the children ill; the husband, too, developed a stomach ailment after he returned from fighting in the Civil War. He spent several months in hospitals in Madrid, and when he came back to Santa María to recover, learning that his wife had sold a few plots of land to pay for the hospital bills, he committed suicide

while she went out to the courtyard to bring in a few sticks of wood to light the stove. Not surprisingly, we also heard a cautionary tale woven about this husband-and-wife union.

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