Estate Inheritance in the Italian Alps (Full Text)

John W. Cole

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ESTATE INHERITANCE IN THE ITALIAN ALPS

by

JOHN W. COLE

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INTRODUCTION

At the northern end of the Val di Non the valley floor rises up to form the base of mountain ridges which separate it from the neighboring Ulten and Etsch valleys (Figure 1). Here lie a number of small villages sharing an ecological situation which sets them apart from other villages in the vicinity. The outstanding feature of this situation is altitude: the villages all lie above the zone in which the principal commercial cultigens of the surrounding valleys can be grown. This, combined with remote location, has kept the area marginal to economic forces emanating from the lowlands and has set the inhabitants of these villages to gain as much as possible of their living directly from their land. The traditional economy of the area is based on mixed mountain agriculture, supplemented by the practice of various crafts and exploitation of timber drawn from the surrounding forests. In its subsistence orientation and marginal involvement with the market, the area presents an interesting contrast to the countryside to both the north and south where production, whether based on similar patterns of mixed mountain agriculture, viniculture, or orchardry, is oriented toward the market (Schreiber, 1948; Wopfner, 1951-60; Altenstetter, 1968; Cole, 1969b, 1970:134-35).

While the area constitutes a single ecological zone and contrasts in its economic patterns with surrounding lowlands, the solutions to other problems of life are not identical from village to village. Communities here can be divided into two
FIGURE 1
REGION TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE

The Italian Region Trentino-Alto Adige (South Tyrol) showing the location of the Upper Val di Non (hatched area).
groups on the basis of the different languages they speak and of their differing cultural traditions. Four of the villages constitute "die Deutschgegend am Nonsberg", the German Nonsberg, and were settled from across the mountains to the north. In these villages variants of German Tyrolese are spoken, and cultural affinities are to the north to the German-speaking Tyrol. In the other villages of the valley live people who speak an ancient romance language, Nônes, in the context of family and village, but who today use Italian in contacts with the wider world. Here cultural affinities are to the south, to the Italian Trentino.

In straddling the frontier between areas of German and Italian culture, the Upper Val di Non reproduces in miniature the contrasts between the two provinces Trentino and South Tyrol which together constitute a semi-autonomous region of the Republic of Italy. A part of the old Austrian Crownland of Tyrol, the region was ceded to Italy in 1918 at the time of the dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following its defeat in World War I. The problems surrounding the incorporation of around a quarter million German-speaking Tyrolese into the Italian polity and economy have been considerable (c.f. Rusinow, 1969; Huter, 1965) and have produced political and cultural dissonance within the Val di Non as well as within the region as a whole (Wolf, 1962).

In common with other culture frontier zones, each linguistic group has its own version of every place name. Thus the "Val di Non" (or "Anaunia") of the Nônes and Italian speaker is called the
"Nonsberg" in German. For the South Tyrol, many German-speakers prefer "Südtirol", although (or because) it is politically charged and conjures up pro-Austrian sentiments. The official Italian designation is "Alto Adige", for which "Tiroler Etschland" and "Provinz Bozen" are acceptable German renderings and have some currency in every-day usage.

It was Eric Wolf's interest in problems of dissonance in cultural frontier zones which resulted in the first study of villages in the Upper Val di Non in 1960 (Wolf, 1962). This was followed by a second visit to the area by Wolf in the summer of 1963. Meanwhile, I had undertaken graduate studies in Anthropology at the University of Michigan and had gravitated from an initial interest in Oceania to a concentration on peasant cultures. My involvement in the study of the Upper Nonsberg began in the fall of 1964 while I was reading on peasant economic systems under Wolf's direction.

As I was interested in conducting a field study of peasant cultural ecology and socioeconomic organization, Dr. Wolf suggested the Upper Val di Non as a possibility. Such a study would complement his earlier study which had emphasized ideology and social organization. Demographic and social data he had collected would provide a "running start" in such a study and entry into the villages would be greatly facilitated because, as a friend of Wolf's, I would not be arriving as a total stranger. Furthermore, I already had some knowledge of German and of life in the German and Austrian Alps, having spent several months traveling there some years before.
The reasons for accepting the suggestion were very appealing, and I enthusiastically set to work preparing for the study.

I arrived in the Upper Nonsberg in September 1965 with my wife and two young daughters and we remained in the field until the end of February 1967. During the period I worked mainly in two adjacent villages, Nones /Italian-speaking Tret (1,162 meters a.s.l.; population 238) and German-speaking St. Felix (1,256 meters a.s.l.; population 335). Numerous excursions were also made to other nearby villages, the town of Fondo, and the cities of Bozen, Meran and Trent. In addition two months were spent in Rome.

The first three months of the study were devoted to developing my linguistic ability, to gaining a working knowledge of the culture and to becoming acquainted with the villagers. This was achieved by working intensively with a limited number of informants (several from each village) and through informal interviews with many other people. The most important results of this phase of the study were the completion of a census of all of the households in the two villages and a calendar of economic, social and ceremonial activities. On the basis of this information I drew up an interview schedule which I then used as a guide in intensive interviews of individual households. Throughout the winter, a season during which there is a minimum of work for the villagers to do, I directed most of my effort to these interviews. I completed interviews with sixty-one families, thirty-two in Tret and twenty-nine in St. Felix. These varied from a single sitting of a few hours with a retired farmer to several cases where I returned on five different days for a total
of more than twenty-five hours of interviewing. Most of the interviews, however, were completed in two sittings of four to five hours each.

As the snow began to disappear from the mountainside in March and the tempo of life in the villages accelerated as the agricultural cycle got under way, I entered the third phase of the study. While I continued to carry out an occasional household interview, from April through November of 1966 I mainly divided my time between detailed observation of economic activities engaged in by villagers and work in the archives in Fondo and Meran, especially the deeds registry offices.

December and January were spent in Rome where I gathered relevant data from available census material and reviewed my field notes for holes. The month of February was spent back in the villages collecting information that the review in Rome had revealed was missing. My family and I then returned to the United States. Finally, both Eric Wolf and I returned to the villages during the summer of 1969.

My Ph.D. dissertation (Cole, 1969a), based on this field study, was completed in April 1969: this essay is excerpted, with modifications, from the dissertation. In addition, several articles based on different aspects of the total study have appeared (Wolf, 1962; Cole, 1969b, 1970) and a final monograph on the area is in preparation (Wolf and Cole, n.d.).

My original participation in the study was made possible by a research grant from the National Science Foundation, supplemented by two grants-in-aid from the University of Michigan Mediterranean Project.
The summer 1969 research was supported by a travel grant from the University of Michigan Project and by a grant-in-aid of research from Wayne State University. For this financial support I am deeply grateful. I am especially indebted to Eric Wolf for suggesting the Val di Non to me in the first place, for allowing me the use of field notes that he made there in 1961 and 1963, and for guidance and encouragement throughout the entire period of the study.

As work in the villages progressed, the importance of understanding the process whereby the family estate is transmitted from one generation to the next became increasingly evident. The social standing of a man within his community is predicated upon the nature of his relationship to the resources from which he derives his living. The man who manages his own resources is eligible for the highest social, political and ceremonial honors the village can bestow, and within his own domestic unit he stands as dominant in relation to its other members. Those who are dependent upon the resources managed by another cannot reasonably expect to receive village honors and have to be content with a subordinate, dependent status within their own domestic group.

Obviously, social and property rights are not static. As individuals proceed through life the nature of their relationship to each other and to productive resources changes. A child shares with his siblings subordination to his father and dependence upon his management of the family estate. As he matures he may stand as heir-apparent to his father, and thus dominant in relationship to
his siblings. Still later, he may in fact succeed to management of the estate, take a wife and begin a family. Thereafter, all who remain dependent on the holding, whether sibling or parent, will be subject to his decisions. As manager of his own estate he will have emerged into what Fortes has called the "politico-jural" sphere: he will be responsible for the conduct of the membership of his domestic unit in the community and eligible for such honors as it has to bestow (1958). On the other hand, he may share management of the resources of the domestic unit with a co-heir, remain at home dependent on a brother who has succeeded to management, or desert the village entirely. In time the new manager will in like fashion be replaced by his own heir or heirs. Thus, a cyclical process can be identified in which social relations and property relations are continually in a state of interdependent development.

However, the developmental cycle of social and property relations within the domestic unit does not proceed in a vacuum. The various domestic units within the community interact with one another, influencing each other's developmental cycle. Moreover, the resulting network of social relations is subject to multiple outside forces emanating from the ecological setting, the market and the state.

THE IDEOLOGY OF INHERITANCE

In making the calculations necessary to the management of his holding, the peasant's mind is occupied with the daily routine and
with a strategy which will make the year a success. Since his resources change little from one year to the next, and since each year's work cycle is a repetition of the one the year before, long-term planning is not complex: it consists in large measure of making a success of one year at a time. While he may hope to obtain a new field or meadow, or plan to increase his small herd of cattle by raising one more calf to maturity, his calculations do not normally include reinvestment. The economics of subsistence farming does not include the concept of growth. If there is seed enough for next year's crop and still enough to eat, if there is sufficient fodder to see the animals through the winter, if house and equipment are in repair, and if there is a bit of money hidden away somewhere in the house, then it has been a good year indeed.

Still, the peasant does think of the future. His own advancing age, his maturing sons and his marriageable daughters require that he consider the long-term disposition of his resources. One day he will be too old to work, and then he will be dead. Before that happens he would like to be sure that his children have all been given the best possible start in adult life. He would like to see every daughter well married and every son with land enough to support a family. Then too, he would like to see the holding that he has maintained against the world for a lifetime remain essentially intact to provide the material basis for the perpetuation of the family line. However, the meager resources at his disposal are, more often than not, inadequate to fulfill both of these goals. He
must balance his desires to perpetuate his name against the future of his children.

At one extreme of the inheritance possibilities the perpetuation of the family estate will be given priority over all other considerations, all land and other resources being kept intact and passed on to a single heir. Other offspring are disinherited and left to make their way through life as best they can. At the other extreme, all property, regardless of how extensive or limited, will be divided among all offspring, each receiving exactly the same share as every other. Intermediate patterns, with some degree of division of estates and varying degrees of inequality of shares, occur in seemingly endless variations: land may be passed on to a single heir but with cash compensation to the disinherited; or land may be divided but only among sons, daughters being provided with a dowry at the time of marriage; or, where a single son gets the land, other sons may be trained in a trade, and so on (c.f. Habakkuk, 1955).

However, in facing the decision of what to do with his own resources, the individual peasant is not faced with this multiplicity of possibilities. He and his fellows have guidelines to follow which assign priorities to the various factors the peasant has to consider; there is a village ideology which provides him with a model of how things are properly done and a national ideology, expressed in laws and backed by a mechanism of enforcement. National and local views of inheritance may be in agreement, or they may be in conflict, but, as we shall see, while both affect the intergenerational transmission of rights to land and other resources, neither one or the other alone, nor
both in combination determine the actual process of inheritance. The use to which ideology is put depends upon the ecologic and economic setting.

As a part of the Italian state, inheritance in the region Trentino-Tiroler Etschland is regulated by a law requiring that all of a man's offspring be provided for at his death. Each heir is supposed to receive an equal share of each parent's land and other belongings, or else be compensated by a cash settlement which is equal to the value of his share of the holding. However, some leeway is allowed. While at least two-thirds of a person's property must be divided equally among his offspring, the testator may dispose of up to one-third of it in any manner he chooses. When the Region became a part of Italy in 1918, the law was acceptable in the Trentino where division of property each generation was already the ideal, but it came into conflict with existing laws set down in the Tyrol while it was still a part of Austria.

While a form of partibility in which a single principal heir received the bulk of the ancestral holding with a smaller portion divided among remaining siblings was practiced in parts of the South Tyrol (in Vintschgau and in the wine-producing areas south of Bozen), single-heir inheritance was the ideal elsewhere (Wolf, 1970). Encouragement of impartibility had been provided by Tyrolese laws from as early as 1404 and again in 1532. In 1770 and 1785 a special category of impartible estates, "closed holdings" (geschlossene Höfe), was established. Division of such holdings through either inheritance or sale was prohibited, although provisions were made
for the free circulation of parcels of plowland and meadow which were owned by these estates but were not a part of their "original" composition. Liberalization of inheritance established by Vienna for the entire monarchy in 1868 was countered by a Tyrolese law of 1900 which renewed the acts of earlier years. However, after the absorption of the South Tyrol by Italy and the assumption of power by the Fascists, pressure was brought to bear in favor of partible inheritance. In 1929 partibility was made mandatory and force was applied to make the regulation effective in the German-speaking regions. Even so, the Tyrolese resisted this effort to abrogate their tradition of impartibility. Under the regime established in northern Italy by the Nazis in the last years of World War II impartibility was again permitted and after the war ended the Italian state did not interfere with its practice. In 1952 the province of Bozen reinstituted the "closed holding" and wrote it into law in 1954. Division of holdings classified as "closed" was again prohibited, and although a number of holdings had lost some land through division in the intervening years, the number of impartible estates in the South Tyrol decreased by only six percent between 1929 and 1954 (Leidlmair, 1965b:570).

This contrast in national inheritance ideology is paralleled in the contrast in ideology locally between the Tyrolese and Nónes villages on the Nonsberg: among the Tyrolese villagers impartible inheritance is the ideal form, the Nónes villagers, on the other hand, prefer the partible inheritance ideology of the Trentino.

In the German villages impartible inheritance ideally takes the form of primogeniture in which the eldest son inherits the entire
property of his parents and younger siblings must either leave the
property altogether, perhaps receiving cash compensation, or remain
in the capacity of subservient dependants. Management of the holding
lies in the hands of the principal heir and all who reside on the
holding are subject to his decisions, whether spouse, offspring,
sibling, or aged parent. Central to the concept of impartible
inheritance here is the insistence that the homestead should remain
intact from generation to generation. The farmstead should consist
of a house-stall complex surrounded by village lands, supplemented
by scattered pieces of land at higher altitudes. Ownership of such
a holding also entitles the owner to the right to send cattle to the
community-owned alm (high pasture) during the summer months and to
use-rights to other communal pasture and forest.

While these lands and rights should remain undivided, other
parcels of land are sometimes attached to the holding and detached
later, either through purchase and sale or through inheritance by
secondary heirs. This practice of impartibility for the bulk of
the land with supplementary parcels of freely circulating land is
not only regarded as proper but conforms to Tyrolese law. Prior
to World War I, and again since 1954, sale of land within each
county has been regulated by a land commission (örtliche Höfekom-
mission) whose permission must be secured in any matter pertaining
to the permanent transfer of land ownership. It is at this point
that the national and local ideologies articulate. The operational
instructions to the commission are handed down by the provincial
council (Landesrat) but the membership is selected (by election)
at the local level. Made up of locally respected men well
acquainted with village events and backed by the state, it is able to effectively enforce its decisions. This commission zealously resists the breakup of any holding either through division by inheritance or piecemeal sale of parcels. It will permit the detachment from a holding only of those parcels which have a history of sale and purchase or which have been brought into the homestead in the form of a dowry by a bride at the time of marriage. Not only is the division of those holdings classified as impartible estates prohibited by the commission but all land sales require its approval. It looks askance at the detachment of land from any holding whether classified as impartible or not, and in certain communes has acted to prevent the sale of land to Italians.

The Tyrolese villages in the Nonsberg have, however, been subjected to special pressures not a factor in most other areas of the South Tyrol: only since 1948 have they been a part of the province of Bozen. During the period 1918-1948 St. Felix and Unser Frau were wards (frazioni) of the commune of Fondo (Province of Trento) and prior to this, although possessing their own local government and churches, they came under the political jurisdiction of Trento. The various Tyrolese land laws, enforced only in the German-speaking regions of the Tyrol, thus did not reach them. Although none of the holdings in the German Nonsberg were legally classified as Geschlossene Höfe during the pre-World War II period, the sympathy of the area with the concept is shown by the voluntary declaration of fourteen holdings in Unser Frau and one in St. Felix as "closed" in 1954, as provided for in the provincial legislation (Landesgesetz) of that year.
In Tret and the other Nônes villages of the Upper Nonsberg the ideal of partible inheritance holds that all of the offspring of a landowner should share equally in the inheritance of his homestead. This holds true regardless of the sex of the heirs, women having rights equal to those of the men. Here the concern is not with the maintenance of a subsistence producing holding as a constant package through time, but rather to insure that each of a man's children will "have something" with which to begin life. The construction of a living-producing holding comes not from the preservation intact of the holding of one's forefathers passed through an unbroken succession of eldest sons, but rather it is expected that each of the offspring will be able to combine his bit of ground with the bit of ground inherited by his wife and from the combination produce enough land to farm. Thus each generation should see the breaking up of parental estates and the formation of new ones out of the pieces, the particular pattern depending on who marries whom, and who inherits what.

If followed rigorously, these ideologies would lead to certain inevitabilities: under impartible inheritance the number of holdings would remain constant through time as would the composition of these holdings; under partibility land would be continually fragmented until each holding became so small as to be economically worthless and the composition of holdings would vary each generation. In fact, neither inevitability has been realized. In German-speaking St. Felix the number of original holdings, recorded in early documents and reflected in the number of Höfrecht (hereditary use-rights to communal land) is 23 and yet the number of holdings supporting
domestic units today is 62. In Romance-speaking Tret there are a total of 50 landed holdings, none so small that it cannot provide a meaningful portion of a family's support and many have had little change in composition for several generations. In the Tyrolean villages some holdings have been divided and others have detached parcels either through sale or transfer by inheritance to secondary heirs. Thus new holdings have been created: traditional homesteads rarely contain all of the land they did in earlier generations. And in each generation in Tret some heirs have been disinherited. Out of every group of siblings one, or a few, of all of the potential heirs have managed to consolidate control of enough land to keep their holding economically viable while others relinquished their claims or were somehow excluded from their share of the inheritance. Obviously, then, other factors than the ideology of inheritance must be operating which affect the transmission of property. That is, the ideology of inheritance is not the only factor to be considered in the actual inheritance process (case studies of the history of estate transmission for representative holdings in St. Felix and Tret are provided in Appendix I).

THE REALITIES OF LIFE

In dealing with the inheritance of rights to property, ethnographic reports have usually limited themselves to descriptions of ideologies, to statements of who should stand in the position of heir and of what is to become of the disinherited. Discussions of
the mechanics and sociology of inheritance have been generally lacking. Occasionally it is noted that exceptions occur, that individuals other than those indicated by ideology often in fact succeed to office or inherit a significant share of the heritable goods, but, except to take note of mechanisms to bypass the mentally and physically unfit, attempts to deal systematically with these exceptions are rare (c.f., Gray, 1964).

In the Upper Nonsberg, both of the inheritance ideologies are honored more in the breach than in the practice. In St. Felix the eldest son rarely inherits the entire undivided holding and in Tret all siblings do not share equally in the inheritance of the entire family holding. In St. Felix holdings are from time to time divided, or parcels of land are detached; often it is not the eldest son who inherits all or the bulk of the estate but instead a younger brother, and at times all sons have been passed over in favor of a daughter. In Tret, where there is strong feeling that all offspring should share equally in the division of the land, it is more usual for one or several heirs to inherit the bulk of the property while most of the other brothers and sisters either receive only a token settlement or nothing at all (see Appendix II).

Certain aspects of life in the Upper Nonsberg make the literal translation of either inheritance ideology into practice virtually impossible (Cole, 1969b):

(1) The subsistence-based economy of the Upper Nonsberg put a premium on the possession of land. Without some sort of a
claim to support from the land it was not possible for individuals to remain in the villages.

(2) Each generation more individuals have been born in the villages than the local economy could support as adults.

(3) Careers outside of the area, in the surrounding Region, were uncertain and rarely could offer material and social rewards equal to those provided by a village holding.

These facts of life are plainly obvious to every villager, as are these consequences: (1) only a percentage of those born in either village will be able to remain there as adults (Table 1); (2) those who succeed to a holding, or marry a landholder, will have the best prospects while those who must seek careers in the Region will have an uncertain life before them. Under these conditions everyone would like to remain on the land with his own row to hoe and, at least potentially, every member of a sibling set is a competitor to every other for their parents' land. Each generation must be sorted into heirs and disinherited, the inheritance process being as much concerned with denying land to some as in securing it for others. Life strategies collide over the matter of land, and the father with land to dispense can no more ignore the wishes of his maturing sons than they the will of their father. Pressures thus generated in the interplay of strategies act upon the way in which property is inherited and can, as we shall see, either fortify or modify the use of inheritance ideology.
### TABLE 1

**LIFE SITUATIONS OF VILLAGERS BORN BETWEEN 1800 AND 1930 WHO SURVIVED TWENTY OR MORE YEARS**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tret</th>
<th>St. Felix</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123 (34.4%)</td>
<td>151 (37.75%)</td>
<td>Remaining in village and married.</td>
<td>140 (35.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191 (53.3%)</td>
<td>248 (72.5%)</td>
<td>Left the village for good after some time in a fringe relationship.</td>
<td>176 (44.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 (12.3%)</td>
<td>34 (10.0%)</td>
<td>Remained in the village as a permanent resident, or in a fringe relationship.</td>
<td>110 (27.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>358 (100%)</td>
<td>342 (100%)</td>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>400 (100%)</td>
</tr>
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THE ESTATE POTENTIAL FACTOR

As a result of the pressure emanating from the realities of village life, holdings tend to be confined within a relatively narrow range of sizes: excluding forestland, over 85 percent of all of the holdings within the two villages fall between 0.5 and 10.0 hectares. This narrow range contrasts with the Trentino-Alto Adige as a whole where holding size varies from smaller than one-half hectare to giants which run into hundreds of hectares (Schreiber, 1948). Where a holding becomes too small to support a man and his family bankruptcy is inevitable. Very small holdings are either combined into larger ones capable of supporting a domestic unit, or are incorporated by existing viable holdings. Where they are large enough to support more than a single domestic unit, landless siblings press for division in order to be able to obtain the material basis which will enable them to create their own domestic unit. As a result of these pressures almost all of today's holdings are of a size sufficient for the support of a single domestic unit but too small for further division into viable fragments. Often enough holdings were divided just too far -- the division produced two or more holdings which were obviously small but large enough to tempt one to try to make a go of it. Three possibilities resulted from such divisions: (1) a man might survive if able to supplement his farm income by engaging in a trade or craft; (2) he might earn money to buy more land by working outside the village, or through a fortunate marriage to a landholding woman enlarge his holding sufficiently so that the year-in, year-out support of his family became
less uncertain; or (3) he could fail, and lose his holding. The lack of availability of alternatives to landownership reinforced this ecological conspiracy to keep holdings from endless fragmentation. Had it been possible, as in the lower reaches of the Nonsberg and in the Trentino at large, to supplement income from the land through craft industries and other alternatives, to the point where land operation became secondary, then holdings could have been divided into meaninglessly small bundles, as they in fact have been in much of the Trentino (Schreiber, 1948). But on the mountainside such supplements and alternatives have been much more limited. The subsistence economy could not support full-time specialists, so that even such indispensable members of society as the blacksmith and the carpenter had to supplement their trade income through the operation of a holding. Even the stone masons of Tret could not count on enough income from their trade to support themselves full-time. Thus there was a constant tendency in the villages to prevent undue fragmentation of the holdings and those that were of marginal size were continually being consolidated into larger holdings.

THE RELATIVE AGE FACTOR

The actual transmission of property rights and the kinds of social relationships likely to develop among male siblings and between them and their father is conditioned by how great an age difference exists between each of the brothers and their father. Other things being equal, the greater the age difference between
father and designated heir (or heirs) the greater the likelihood that he will in fact be the heir and, conversely, the less the age difference the more likely that a given designated heir will fail to realize his inheritance.

We have seen that the Tyrolese father is very reluctant to relinquish managerial control of his holding -- a situation which usually ends only with his death or physical incapacity. While old Tyrolers only seem to live forever, it is not unusual to find a man in his seventies or even eighties vigorously working, in full managerial control of his land. This means that even if he had married in his thirties his oldest children are likely to be forty or fifty when he is finally willing to turn the holding over to the new generation. Even when the owner gives up the ghost at a more reasonable age, say sixty-five, the heir-designate will in most cases have spent over twenty years of physical adulthood as his father's man. It is a long wait for the potential heir, and it is not surprising that friction between the peasant and his heir is common. Despite the clear cut advantages of patiently waiting it out until one has a holding of one's own, frictions growing out of the continuing dominance of the father and a young man's desires for independence result in many heirs foregoing their inheritance and leaving the village for the outside world. Bitter scenes have accompanied these departures, with the resulting break in relations between the two men being irreparable. Of the thirty-three current holdings in St. Felix where male heirs were available, seventeen eldest sons have deserted the holding, a younger brother or sister succeeding in their place (see Table 2 and Appendix II).
### TABLE 2

**AGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FATHER AND ELDEST SON IN RELATION TO INHERITANCE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

#### St. Felix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Difference between Father and Eldest Son:</th>
<th>Disinherited</th>
<th>Principal Heir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total: from Estate:</td>
<td>to Estate:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 years</td>
<td>15 (71.4%)</td>
<td>6 (28.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35 years</td>
<td>16 (66.7%)</td>
<td>8 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 years</td>
<td>6 (37.5%)</td>
<td>10 (62.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45 years</td>
<td>3 (75.0%)</td>
<td>1 (25.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
<td>3 (37.5%)</td>
<td>5 (62.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43 (58.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (41.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Tret:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Difference between Father and Eldest Son:</th>
<th>Disinherited</th>
<th>Principal Heir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total: from Estate:</td>
<td>to Estate:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 years</td>
<td>15 (55.6%)</td>
<td>12 (44.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35 years</td>
<td>8 (50.0%)</td>
<td>8 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 years</td>
<td>1 (25.0%)</td>
<td>3 (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45 years</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3

AGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FATHER AND ELDEST SON IN
RELATION TO INHERITANCE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

St. Felix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Difference between Father and Eldest son:</th>
<th>Total:</th>
<th>Disinherited</th>
<th>Principal Heir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11 (78.5%)</td>
<td>3 (21.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6 (60.0%)</td>
<td>4 (40.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4 (36.4%)</td>
<td>7 (63.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 (25.0%)</td>
<td>3 (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 (25.0%)</td>
<td>3 (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23 (53.5%)</td>
<td>20 (46.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tret:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Difference between Father and Eldest son:</th>
<th>Total:</th>
<th>Disinherited</th>
<th>Principal Heir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (00.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3 (42.9%)</td>
<td>4 (57.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 (16.7%)</td>
<td>5 (83.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 45 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0 (00.0%)</td>
<td>3 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8 (36.4%)</td>
<td>14 (63.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As long as they remain on their natal holding men and women remain dependent on the whims of their fathers. What is to be done in the fields on any given day and how it is to be carried out is decided by the father. Whether or not to buy new items of clothing, and even such matters as whether or not to go to a dance and when to be home are dictated by the parents, to say nothing of permission to spend the day working for another villager, or to leave the village for a few days or perhaps a week to earn money working as agricultural laborers in the lowlands. And where the individual does earn money by his own labor, his earnings are turned over to his parents who decide how they are to be used.

As long as his father continues to manage the holding, the heir must postpone marriage and the beginning of a family. Given the fact that most of the holdings are of a size where they will be able to support but a single domestic unit, the creation of a second unit dependent upon the holding's produce would be out of the question. The marriage of any of the siblings while remaining at home would, while bringing in another work hand, also be bringing in another mouth to feed, and the threat of additional mouths in the form of children. As the family labor pool is sufficient to handle the majority of the work, the addition of more labor is of little benefit and would not compensate for the threat it would pose to individuals already on the holding and dependent on it for their support. The siblings of the heir would feel threatened by the marriage of any of their number, if that individual remained
on the holding, and it would conflict with the parents' desire to
give maximum support to all of their offspring.

Thus the interests of an heir-designate may clash not only
with those of his father, but with his younger siblings as well.
Moreover, at twenty-one a youth is recognized by law as mature enough
to manage his own affairs and take a place as an adult member of the
community, and village opinion is willing to confer adult status on
even younger persons who demonstrate responsibility and competence.
To remain at home under the dominance of a father represents a
sacrifice of independance now for the promise of the material security
and social standing that ownership of a holding will bring in the future.

So, the oldest son often leaves the natal homestead and the
village, a younger son succeeding as heir-apparent. When such a break
takes place, it may not be the second in line, or even the third, who
moves into position as heir. Those offspring next in line, having
apparently no hope of succeeding to the holding, will have left home
to seek their fortune in the outside world during the period of time
when the eldest son was still at home. Often they have made a start
for themselves in life, perhaps as craft specialists such as blacksmiths,
carpenters, or teamsters, and may be reluctant to give up their specialty
to return home. Thus it is often one of the younger sons who eventually
comes into possession of the holding, one who was still young enough
at the time the eldest made the final break to be uncommitted in a
life career.

Thus on a holding in St. Felix the third of five sons succeeded
to management of the estate. The eldest son, born in 1900 when his
father was thirty-five years old was to be the heir, but wished to marry a girl on another village holding. The girl's father had no sons and, his holding being in debt, he saw an opportunity to insure security for his old age. He agreed to allow the marriage to take place provided the lad would agree to pay off the debts and, in time, take over management of his holding. The boy's father was opposed to the marriage under any conditions: in his early sixties at the time, with minor children still at home, he was not yet willing to turn over management nor to have a new bride added to the domestic unit. He was equally unenthusiastic about having his son leave home for the girl's estate. Friction between father and son grew, and in 1926 the son married the girl and deserted his patrimony.

The father then approached the second son, born in 1903, and offered to leave the estate to him. This son, however, having assumed that his elder brother would be the heir, had undertaken and completed an apprenticeship to a blacksmith in Fondo, and by the time his brother married he had been established for two years as the smith in Tret. He did not care to give up his profession, and despite much pleading by his father, remained in Tret. Thus the father eventually turned to his third son, only twenty-one at the time of his oldest brother's marriage. By the age of thirty-three, his age at the death of his father in 1938, this son had succeeded to management of the holding.

If the father marries later in life, when he is near forty, the eldest son would not have so many years to wait between the
time he reaches maturity and the death or incapacity of his father, and would be more likely to remain at home and assume the rights and responsibilities of the inheritance. In fact, irrespective of ideology or position in the order of birth of male siblings, the son who is arriving at maturity just at the time that his father dies or is contemplating retirement stands the best chance of being heir to the estate. But, whoever ends up succeeding to management will be in uncontested control of the entire undivided holding, although he may have to contend with the claims of other siblings who wish to remain at home. Only the heir will be in a position to marry and pursue social and political honors in the village at large.

Yet, where conflicts of interest between generations do arise over management of a holding, they are not always resolved in favor of the father: he may retire from management even though physically able. This is unlikely as long as he still has dependent children, but once they are all grown, pressures to have him turn over the holding mount, especially if his wife has died. Villagers of both Tyrolese and Nones origin agree that the goal of a family is to raise children: once this goal has been reached a man should step aside in favor of his heir. Only if his father retires can the son marry and begin to build his own family, so that any postponement of the relinquishment of management by the father after his children are all adult seems unreasonable to villagers. While unreasonable old men are to be found, most do in fact turn over their holdings under these circumstances. The expectation is that they will then take up the role of dependent parent. Yet, on occasion a retired
Tyroler has once again struck out for independence. Sprinkled throughout the histories of the various estates in the villages are cases of old widowers who have relinquished their patrimony only to leave home to marry a widow with her own holding and minor children, thus to begin life anew. Two such indomitable souls are currently managing estates in St. Felix and Unser Frau, one having taken up his new life at fifty-three, the other in his sixties.

The above discussion assumes the pattern of impartible inheritance of the German Nonsberg, but the rule applies equally well to the case of partible inheritance found in the Nones villages. Where the father marries late in life the eldest son tends to assume control of holding operation upon the death of his father, employing various strategies to gain control of as much of the holding as possible; younger sons tend to move off of the holding and build lives for themselves elsewhere. But, where the father has married at an early age it is the older sons who move away and the younger sons who remain to eventually assume control of the land. This is fortified by the tendency of landowners to leave the larger share of their holding to those offspring who actually remain on the land with them and to leave only a few fields or a fraction of ownership to those who made a life for themselves elsewhere. This practice is considered proper by the villagers, who see it as an injustice when an individual who has remained at home all his life is not favored in his father's will.

A case from Tret illustrates both the desertion of the
village by older sons and a unique deviation from the practice of leaving the estate in the control of a son who has remained on the holding. The oldest of the brothers (2) (see Figure 2) left home and migrated to the United States in 1909, when he was but nineteen and his father fifty-three. The second son (3) remained in the village until he was twenty-five years old, at which time he too went to America. Meanwhile the oldest daughter (1) had also left home, marrying a man from a nearby town, Fondo, in 1908, and another daughter (6) left the village to marry a lowlander in 1920. That left the third son (4) and two younger daughters (5 and 7) at home with their father. However, shortly after 1920 the youngest daughter (7) departed permanently to work in Meran, thereafter returning home only occasionally for visits and rarely participating in the holding’s affairs.

Nonetheless, when the father died in 1939 it was discovered that he had left the bulk of his estate to the absent youngest daughter (7), with smaller shares going to the son and daughter (4 and 5) still at home (token shares went to the three living children who where already established outside of the village). The third son, who had
expected to inherit a controlling share of the holding, was very upset about this. The father had also made no provision to disinherit the daughter should she marry, which increased his anxiety—what if she should marry and return to the village with her husband? Since she owned a controlling share he would be powerless to stop her. She would be able to take over the holding and he would have to leave the village. However, in 1948 this sister (7) married a man who was well established in Meran, but, although her brother and sister continued to manage the estate, she would not relinquish her ownership, even though married. In the same year the brother (4) married and soon after his unmarried sister (5) left to seek employment elsewhere. However, tragedy followed: soon after the birth of a daughter in 1949 his wife died, and the unmarried sister (5) returned home to take her place. The household retained this composition until 1966, when the father died.

The provisions of the will of 1948 are regarded by the villagers as irregular and "not right". Some felt sympathy for this man, but to others the degree of control over his life which the will had placed in the hands of a woman was a source of amusement.

While in this particular example and others as well a younger son remained on the holding, more frequently the heir has been the oldest son. Interestingly enough, the percentage of eldest sons succeeding to management is actually higher than in St. Felix (see Table 2 and Appendix II). Since a particular sibling is not designated as heir early in life and required to remain at home
thereafter to endure the pressures that that entails, older sons in Tret have more flexibility in their life strategies than do their St. Felix counterparts. They might even leave the village intent upon becoming permanent migrants, and yet return after a period of years to take up life on their natal holding. The father of the current owner of a Tret holding, for example, spent most of his life working in Asia and North and South America, yet contributing money to his father’s household, and buying more land in the village, he eventually returned and became the manager of the estate.

ALTERNATIVE CAREERS

It must be noted, however, that the span of ages does not always remain constant. It is modified by the importance of holding land versus other economic alternatives which are available to potential heirs. This may be formally stated in the following way: the relative age between landowner and heir is dependent upon the importance of holding land. Where the material rewards of landownership are superior to alternative economic pursuits this relative age will tend to be small; where such rewards are inferior to those of other economic pursuits, the relative age will tend to be greater. That is to say that sons will be more inclined to postpone freedom of decision making in favor of gaining control over their inheritance and remain under the control of their father where they do not have good economic alternatives to a life on the land. Under such circumstances they will be more inclined to remain at home and wait for their inheritance, to
remain dependent upon their father. After all, freedom from the
domination of their fathers would mean little if they could not find
an occupation which would furnish at least comparable material re­
wards, allowing them to marry, raise a family and achieve a position
of relative economic and social security. On the other hand, when
good alternatives do exist that would enable the individual to
establish himself in a position of economic and hence social well
being, they will tend not to remain subservient to their father but
to elect one of the available alternatives. Thus, the optimum span
of age difference between fathers and heirs will shift in response
to available economic opportunities. Since the Upper Nonsberg itself
offers no alternatives to a life on the land, this will be determined
by non-local economic factors: by the opportunities for careers
outside of the villages.

However, as we have noted, possibilities outside of the
community have been very limited in the past. There was no market
for labor which would provide the kind of year around, long-term
security that is needed to enable a man to marry, raise a family
and pursue social and political honors within the community. Those
who have left the villages to seek employment in the lowlands and
have found careers which offered reasonable assurance of long-term
material security have been in the minority, and the only other
alternatives were to join the church or migrate. Only since the
1950's has the demand for labor within the Trentino-Tiroler
Etschland risen to the point where outside employment could rival
the living produced by a village homestead. Even during the years
in which the Bozen industrial zone was established and grew, opportunities for employment were not available to the villagers (nor to anyone within the South Tyrol), because of the Fascist policy of barring local participation in favor of immigrants from the south. Thus, although there have been fluctuations in the economy of the Region over the years, landholding within the villages has consistently provided the best possible living for the sons of the Upper Nonsberg, and the desire for land has remained correspondingly high. Since 1956, however, the new career possibilities have induced many youths to leave the village, not only acting to increase the relative age between father and heir, but to cause an entire revision of the local economic organization (Cole, 1969b).

But, even in the past some of those who left the village did succeed in extra-village careers and of these some became very wealthy by village standards. Although most were not so successful, the few who were must have provided inspiration for those young men who did contemplate leaving home. In this century several men born in the village have done very well as innkeepers or animal traders, and a number of others have found secure posts in the Italian civil service. One woman, raised on a holding in Tret, worked up through local civil service posts to a job with the Italian consulate in London. Quitting her post there to join the British civil service, she now works for a British consulate in the West Indies. While this woman's success took her out of the Region altogether, others have done as well while remaining nearer to home. The owner of an estate in Tret, for example, originally inherited one-half of his natal holding. He worked this for
a time and then built a small bar on the Gampen road. Moderately successful there, he sold his bar to the current owner, and eventually sold his land and apartment as well. He went first to Fondo, then to Meran, and finally to Bozen, each time making a beginning by renting a bar, then buying one, and each time moving to a larger business in a better location. Since 1962 he has been buying land in Tret and by 1965 he had begun to build a tourist complex there -- two cottages and a swimming pool were built in that year, and by 1969 he had added a bar and pension as well. While this man's recent entrepreneurial efforts in the village capitalize on opportunities not available in former decades, his early career represents the kind of success former generations of disinherited strove to achieve.

THE INHERITANCE PROCESS IN TRET

Having outlined the inheritance ideologies of the villages and separately taken up the various factors which affect their implementation, it is now possible to consider the inheritance process as a whole, together with some of its consequences.

In Tret, as we have seen, the life goal of the estate manager to provide each of his offspring with a good start in adult life would ideally mean that each son had his own land and each daughter a husband with land, but the modest scale of his own situation makes this goal unrealistic and he knows that, unless the number of his children is few, he will not be able to provide for
all. Likewise, his children realize that only some of them will be able to remain on the land as permanent residents of the village: others will be forced to seek careers elsewhere.

When a man dies without a will, or when a will is drawn up while all of his children are still dependent, each will be awarded an equal share of ownership of his property. However, since the primary goal of the parent is to see all of his children established in life, a will drawn up after some of his sons and daughters have grown to adulthood can be modified to reflect differing degrees of independence from the natal homestead. In this, as we have seen, Italian law is permissive to the extent that it does not insist upon an actual division of land, but allows for the substitution of cash payments; it also permits up to one-third of the property to be distributed as the owner wishes. Thus wills can be used to favor those who are still in some degree dependent on support from the holding at the time the will is drawn up.

This is done by leaving only a token fraction of ownership to married daughters and to other children who seem to be making good on the outside, or by leaving them a full share but specifying that those who remain in the village have the option of paying them a cash settlement if they so choose. The bulk of the ownership is then divided among those children who have stayed in and around the village. However, it is rare for anyone to be left out of the inheritance entirely. Not only does the will transmit the means to a livelihood, but it also expresses the parents' interest in the well-being of the heir. To be totally excluded from the inheritance is to be disinherited in the most severe sense of the term.
However, if anyone is to receive enough land to provide a living, then most must somehow be excluded. To follow the national inheritance ideology in spirit is a practical impossibility. Ways must be found to concentrate management of the holding in the hands of no more of the heirs than it can support. In extreme cases parents have "sold" all or the bulk of their estate to the intended heir, in a transaction which involved little more than a transfer of title since no money actually changed hands, thus eliminating the need for a will. But most men do not wish to lose control of their land while they still live, not even to a son, and so most estates are passed on either through a will or the provisions of intestacy. Since Italian law makes no distinctions among different kinds of property, the testator can specify that only one, or a few, of his many heirs are to receive title to all (or most) of the land, but with the provision that they are to pay the remaining heirs an amount of cash equal to the value of the land that heir would have received had the land, etc., actually been divided. Thus an estate manager in Tret, who died in 1939, specified in his will that his six children, one male and five females, were to each receive one-sixth of his estate. However, the son was to receive the house, all of the land, livestock, and equipment, but had to agree to pay each of the daughters a cash settlement equal to the value of one-sixth of the estate at such time as he was able. Should he die before the obligation to pay off his co-heirs was completed, his own heirs would inherit the property, and also the obligation to complete the payoff. Thus the letter of the law is satisfied, but
actual control over the property is limited to a specific heir or group of heirs.

In the example given, the actual heir to management of the estate was determined, but this is not usually the case. Where an owner dies intestate, or simply specifies that a number of his offspring are to share in ownership of the estate, the problem of succession to management is not solved. What does happen, however, is that the recording of the names of the several new owners in the commune archives satisfies the state, removing the process of determination from what Fortes has called the politico-jural domain into the domestic domain (1958:1-14). Two or more heirs may have equal rights to an estate as recorded in the archives, but, as the result of a developmental process within the domestic unit which is invisible to the state, one heir may be enjoying full control over management of the estate, others being totally or partially excluded from participation in its affairs. How they are to manage their shares is left up to them — it is never specified in their parents' wills. At least initially they will continue to operate it cooperatively, as they did before their father retired or died, but as time passes pressures to actually divide the land will mount.

The most immediate demands for a change in the status quo are likely to come from siblings who have married into other village holdings. No longer receiving any support from their natal holding, they will be anxious to translate their share in its ownership into something tangible. The alternatives available to them are to have those remaining on the land buy them out or to relinquish their share
of ownership of the whole for complete ownership of a parcel, usually a parcel or two of land. The preference of the out-married sibling is clear: he would like the land. In this subsistence economy the money to pay off an ownership share immediately is not likely to be at hand, and a piece of land now is worth far more than a promise of money in the future. The claimant is especially likely to be successful if he is a brother who has succeeded in marrying a woman with land. Sisters, however, may have to make do with the promise. Fathers, whose goal it is to see all of their offspring established in life, regard a girl's marriage to a landholder as a fulfillment of this goal. For her to receive a part of his holding as well would be to favor her unduly, and at the expense of his other children still dependent on its produce. Specifying that daughters who are married at the time the will is made out are to be paid off, wills are also frequently made to state that any single daughters who do inherit ownership of a share in the holding are to be paid off if they subsequently marry. Even when this is not actually specified in the will, those remaining on the land are unlikely to allow a sister who marries to have land unless her need is great. If her husband's holding is so small that her life with him is likely to be a real hardship without a few additional parcels of land, they may allow her to have them, especially if their own holding is relatively large. At any rate, for one reason or another, several parcels of land are likely to be detached from the parental holding.

While the field study was in progress one of the largest holdings in Tret was in the midst of such a conflict. At the time
of the father's death in 1961 two daughters (6 and 7) (see Figure 3) had already left home, both migrants to America, and the second son (3) had left the village to work in the Trentino. The oldest daughter had married an estate manager in Tret, and the oldest son had laid claim to a second building complex owned by the holding and married a girl with an estate of her own. Two brothers and a sister (3, 4 and 8) remained on the holding.

![Genealogy Diagram](image)

**FIGURE 3**

**GENEALOGY OF TRET DOMESTIC GROUP NO. 2**

The father had specified that each of his offspring was to receive an equal share in the holding, and almost immediately the two siblings who were married in the village (1 and 2) began to press for a division of the land: both wished to translate their share in the undivided holding for one-eighth of the land. The girl's husband is an active entrepreneur, one of the first in the village to turn his efforts toward commercial milk production. For him, the fields his wife would receive meant meadow enough for another cow or two in the stall, and that meant more milk that he could sell, hence an increase in cash income.

The married brother (2) needed the land for a different, but related, reason: his wife's estate was too small to support
his family and, in order to make a go of it, he had taken a job with a neighboring commune, working as a laborer on a project to build a community water system. He commuted daily to this job on his motorbike, leaving before sunrise in the morning and returning late at night. He hoped that his share of the estate, when added to his wife's land, would enable him to give up his outside job and support his family from the land alone.

The sibling sub-set still on the holding recognized the legitimacy of these claims, but wished to postpone the actual division as long as possible since any loss of land from the estate would mean a reduction in their own income. They successfully resisted division through the 1966 agricultural season, but in the winter of that year they capitulated. They will continue to manage five-eighths of the estate, their own shares plus those of siblings 5 and 6. One-eighth was detached for the eldest daughter (1) and the married brother took over control of two-eighths, his own share, plus the share of one sister (7), whom he will pay off.

In the final settlement the two brothers who have remained at home succeeded in establishing a hedge against further division. The other sister in America (6) had returned for a visit during the summer and had asked that her share be given to the youngest girl (8) when the division was made. However, the two brothers refused to do this: instead they had her recorded as a part-owner of the five-eighths that they manage. Had they honored her request, and had the youngest daughter someday married she would have been able to claim two-eighths of the estate, instead of just the one-eighth that
she inherited.

Once an estate has been transmitted through inheritance, and some parcels perhaps detached as in the above example, the operation of the remaining land can be achieved in several different ways. It may be kept intact and managed jointly by the remaining siblings for some time, as in the example above, or even for a lifetime. A percentage (about 10 percent during the period of the study) of the village holdings have been run by such domestic units at all times in the past for which records are available. Since alternatives to remaining on the holding are poor, the number of siblings who remain at home tends to approach the number the land will support. The marriage of any man on the holding is therefore a potential threat to the security of the others. And since all are very directly affected by such a marriage, the courting process involves not only the mutual acceptance of bride and groom but approval of the bride by the entire sibling sub-set. Long courtships are the result, during which the bride-to-be is gradually integrated into the social life and work routine of the household. All can come to naught if frictions develop, and they often do, especially between the girl and her beloved's sister who realistically may see her role as mistress of the kitchen threatened. If this potential friction can be avoided (at least until after the marriage) by a sufficiently diplomatic girl, or resolved by a man willing to put his sisters "in their place", the marriage can finally take place.

Even after the marriage a holding will remain intact, the unmarried siblings cooperating with the married couple in its man-
agement. However, the addition of an outside adult to the household, together with the family the married couple build, will in time crowd at least some of the other siblings into the fringe population, and if one or two remain at home they will tend to see the married individual as the principal owner of the holding because it is his children who will eventually succeed to its management.

Only large enough to support a single domestic unit, further division of the holding is unlikely and the marriage of any other individual dependent on the same holding is therefore out of the question. However, for those few estates of larger size, the possibility always exists that another brother may seek a division in order to obtain land to support a family of his own. As both brothers have equal claim to the estate, the division is likely. But in the division the ownership-shares of the unmarried siblings must be dealt with: other siblings must either be paid off, or their claims divided between the two newly created holdings. In this all affected parties must be consulted.

The inheritance process thus tends to produce a single individual in managerial control of each holding, but with the possibility that this control will be shared with one or two siblings who have stayed at home, but never married. Almost certainly there will remain other siblings, also unmarried, in a fringe relationship, and still others who own shares of the holding, but who have migrated, joined the church, or otherwise become completely independent of their natal homestead. This situation produces an awkward separation of managerial control over land and
ownership of land. Those who remain at home will have full control over the disposition of the fruits of the land, but they cannot mortgage or sell it without the cooperation of all of the part owners, wherever they may be. On the other hand, ownership of a share of a holding does not automatically confer rights to a living from the land. This can be achieved only by active participation in the operation of the holding. Those who absent themselves completely from the holding lose all rights to an income from the land; those in the fringe relationship, however, retain the right to periodic support. Armed with ownership of a fraction of the holding, this right is secured with continuing donations of labor and cash.

The problems brought about by the separation of management and ownership sooner or later cause the manager of the holding to attempt to consolidate ownership of the holding, if not for himself, then so that his children will be able to inherit the land with no complications caused by possible claims from distant cousins. Unmarried siblings of the manager present the smallest problem. Even if they will not give or sell their share to him, they can be counted on to leave them to either the manager or to his children in their wills. But, an heir who has left the village and married -- perhaps in Argentina -- presents a greater problem. If the manager does not succeed in obtaining his share of ownership prior to the death of the absent part-owner, they will be inherited by the absent one's children. This can get completely out of hand so that in a generation or two it is possible for a fraction of an estate to have literally dozens of owners, scattered over a continent or two, some of them perhaps even unaware
that they had an ancestor who came from a place called Tret. Such cases have fortunately not been frequent, but they have occurred.

If an estate manager is lucky, brothers and sisters who have left home and prospered in the outside world will donate their shares to him, and siblings who have become priests, nuns or monks and renounced worldly things will also renounce their claim to the land. Most are not so lucky, and usually the necessary money must be earned through operation of the holding, supplemented in all likelihood, by laboring outside the villages, to pay the cash settlement. However, on these subsistence holdings the cash income is meager, and whole lifetimes may pass before the consolidation of ownership is completed. The accumulation of the necessary sum can become the major economic burden in the landholder's entire life.

So, despite an ideology of partibility, the ecological situation -- which includes the marginal position of the village in relationship to the Regional economy -- prevents the endless division of holdings in Tret, and causes each generation to reduce the number of claimants to a living from the land from an entire sibling set to a single individual. Which of the brothers is likely to end up with control of a specific holding cannot be predicted a priori, but, as we have seen, his selection is not a random process.
Since the ideology in St. Felix is to retain each holding intact through the years, the problem is not to explain what has prevented fragmentation, but rather to account for the division of property that has occurred. That holdings have in fact been divided we have already seen in the expansion of the number of holdings from 23 to 62 and despite the differences in ideology between the two villages, both the mean holding size (between four and five hectares in each village) and the range of holding sizes are very similar in Tret and St. Felix. Furthermore, we have noted that, in the absence of reasonable alternatives, younger brothers are likely to put pressure on their father and his heir to divide the holding so that they, too, can obtain the means to support a family.

While the father designates a single son as his successor and heir, he does not completely exclude all of his other children from consideration in his will. He would like to provide all with a start in adult life, insofar as he can without impairing the unity of the homestead. And as in Tret, he considers the position in life of each of his offspring in making up his will. Married daughters, and sons and daughters who have migrated, joined the church or otherwise established themselves outside of the village can be excluded completely, while those who are still at home or in a fringe relationship to the holding continue to be a source of parental concern. This can be expressed by awarding them rights to a living from the land, either written into the will, or simply made clear to the principal heir as
a parental desire.

When expressed in a will the secondary heir will typically be awarded ownership of a room in the house and usufruct rights to a living from the land. While this apparently secures them a living for as long as they choose to remain at home, they are clearly in a position of subordination vis-a-vis the principal heir, with little voice in the operation of the holding. Where their rights are based on no more than the desire of a parent, their position is even more tenuous, in fact entirely dependent on the good will of the inheriting brother. In either case the actual manager of the holding can unilaterally decide their fate: he has a free hand where his siblings' rights are not protected by a will, and even when protected by a clause in a will their rights can be terminated by a cash payment whenever the heir wishes. It is also understood by all parties that women lose their usufruct rights at marriage, whether this is specified in the will or not, as does any individual, regardless of sex, who subsequently leaves the village and ceases to participate in its operation. Prior to the Fascist reign in Italy the entire holding could simply be left to a single heir, leaving him a free hand in dealing with his siblings. Under these circumstances any hope for support from the land depended entirely on the kind of social relationship developed by the disinherited with their brother.

Since the Trentino-Tiroler Etschland has been a part of Italy and especially since the Fascist assumption of power, partible inheritance as the official policy of the state required that
Tyrolese holdings be divided. This edict was resisted in St. Felix as it was throughout the Tyrol. Various subterfuges were used to evade the law, such as selling all or most of the estate to one son, while the father still lived, in a transaction in which no money changed hands. More often the Tyrolese evaded the law by simply outliving the Fascist state. But even when the father did die and all of his children were duly recorded as owning a fractional share of the estate, the land was rarely divided. The ecological position of the villages was little different in the thirties and forties than it had been earlier and there would have been no way for a person to parlay a fraction of a too-small estate into a living. A single individual would succeed to management of the estate, as before, and in time consolidate ownership of the estate much in the manner that estate managers in Tret have always done it: by paying off some heirs, having shares donated by others, and relying on unmarried siblings to will their shares to either the manager or his offspring. A recalcitrant individual might have appealed to the Italian courts and won a share of the land for himself (villagers have never been shy about going to court), but in addition to the ecological limitations, he would have had to live with the stigma of a role as collaborator. No record exists to show that anyone in St. Felix has ever done so.

Since the establishment of the impartible estate law of 1954 in Province Bozen, landowners can again, in effect, leave their estates to a single heir. All offspring must be included in the will, but it can be specified that one of the group has the right to
pay off all of the others, giving this individual de facto control of the entire holding.

While some division of property took place during Fascist rule, most had taken place prior to this period. Moving onto uninhabited land, the original homesteaders here staked out holdings which were small enough to work with the labor available to a domestic unit, supplemented seasonally by hired hands or labor exchange, but large enough to grow sufficient fodder to maintain the family herd of sheep and cattle throughout the year and to provide wheat and rye enough for the peasant and his family. These original estates appear to have contained around six-and-one-half or seven hectares of land in the village, supplemented by scattered parcels of mountain and forest, compared to the mean of four to five hectares on current holdings. Pressures to divide these holdings would have begun as soon as the homestead period had ended and no more open areas existed. There is documentary evidence that divisions of estates were made in the centuries following the closing of the frontier early in the fourteenth century (Tarneller, 1909:599-602). By 1800 there were already at least double the number of original holdings, and the introduction of the potato at about that time, increasing the per hectare calorie yield for plowland, made possible the support of still more domestic units and no doubt contributed to the divisions which took place in the nineteenth century. By 1879 the number of holdings, listed in a document for that year assigning estate rights, had grown to 56, few less than the 62 domestic units village lands now support.
Division of estates has occurred where they were large enough to suffer the loss of a number of parcels of land without seriously impairing their potential in providing support for a domestic group. These consist for the most part of parcels of forest or mountain meadow, but could also include plowland and village meadows which were not a part of the traditional holding, but had been purchased or brought into marriage by the bride of a former owner. If the main holding was large enough to support the principal heir and his dependents, some of these lands could be sacrificed in the interest of a sibling, either male or female, with prospects of marriage to a village landowner. Such a move would be particularly likely when the prospective spouse's holding was on the small side, and the additional land could thus make the difference between a marginal and an adequate existence.

Where the total landholding was clearly large enough to support more than a single domestic unit, agitation from younger brothers for a share of the holding was likely and the susceptibility of fathers to their demands at its highest. A large holding can be operated only with the help of labor beyond that available to a nuclear family with only small children. Typically this is provided either by one or more siblings who remain at home, or by residence on the holding of an outsider who subsists there in return for his labor. However, in this marginal village the greater output of a larger holding was almost impossible to translate into a higher standard of living. One can eat only so many potatoes and so much sauerkraut, and getting produce to market over mountain trails was a formidable task. At best a few more cattle might be raised, herded to market and sold, but holdings could
not be commercialized. The production of a large holding could only be used to support people, not make its owner wealthy. Thus division of the holding was unlikely to have much effect on the material well-being of the principal heir. Instead of keeping a brother and sister attached to the household of the principal heir, why not create two separate households, and if two households can be supported, why not let the second be composed of a younger brother and his wife? Such pressures have been difficult to resist through the years. Even where documentary evidence is absent, the constellation of lands around the scattered building complexes in St. Felix make identification of the ancestral holdings possible, and in many cases the ancestral lines of the current two, three or four families on these holdings converge on a single ancestor at some point within the last 200 years (e.g., Appendix I). As of 1965 only one holding had escaped such a major division of its original lands, and this holding was divided during the period of the field study.

The outright division of a holding, with each of the segments receiving a like share of all categories of land, would maximize the viability of each of the holdings, but was possible only in the case of large holdings. Those in the medium and small range could not survive such a division: it would prove ruinous to both halves. The owners of such holdings have therefore tenaciously resisted such divisions. However, the lands crucial to a holding are its plowland and village meadows, where all of the crops and most of the fodder for the animals are produced. Outlying land, the forests and mountain meadows, play a supplemental role, although comprising the
greater part of the hectarage of most holdings. In a number of cases secondary heirs have exploited this fact and have convinced their father to provide them with several contiguous parcels of mountain meadow or forest, which they have then attempted to convert into plowland and meadow. Of small size and located on land marginal to the use to which it is put, such holdings have produced a poor living and not all have survived.

INHERITANCE AND WOMEN

So far our discussion has centered on the inheritance of property by men. While women are not prohibited from owning land and in fact often do own a number of parcels either as a result of purchase or inheritance, they become principal heirs only under extraordinary circumstances. The expectation for most women who remain in the villages is to be provided for either through marriage or, if unmarried, through subsistence rights to their natal homesteads.

In both villages parents hope that at least some of their daughters will marry, and since a man without land cannot hope to support a family, that marriage will take place with a man with a holding of his own, either in her natal village, or in one of the other villages in the surrounding region. Such a marriage is regarded by all as the equivalent for a woman of succession to management of a holding by a man. It establishes her right to support from her husband's estate, and at marriage she is required to give up her claim to support from her father's land: to include her in the
inheritance, or to allow her to continue to enjoy the right to some of the fruits of her father's land would be to give her more than her fair share, to favor her at the expense of her siblings. In all cases where marriage takes her out of the village she will lose all claim to support from village lands. At most she will receive a cash settlement for whatever share of her father's land she held. However, if her marriage is to another villager she may be able to parlay her fractional share of ownership in the natal holding into complete ownership of one or more parcels of land, which she and her husband will then work together with his land. It is unlikely that she will receive these parcels at the time of her marriage, however, unless her father has already died. She will have to wait until he either dies or decides to retire, and even after that the actual division of the estate will depend on the decision of either the principal heir (St. Felix) or agreement of all of the heirs (Tret).

Any land that a woman may receive in this manner is owned by her, not her husband. It can thus be sold only with her approval, and is transmitted to their children by her will, separately from the land owned by her husband. Whether a girl marrying within the village receives land to take with her into marriage is largely a function of the relative sizes of the holdings of her husband and her father: it is most likely when she and her husband have a real need for more land and where her natal estate can stand its loss without substantially affecting its ability to support those dependent on it.

It should be emphasized that it is the fact that marriage furnishes a girl with a livelihood that is regarded as the equivalent
of an inheritance. While a dowry is one of the prerequisites for marriage, it is not regarded as a substitute for inheritance. The couple must have the furnishings for their apartment in order to marry, but while the bride traditionally provides certain of these furnishings, it sometimes happens that they are all furnished by the groom: if he can afford them and his bride's family cannot, he will not stand on ceremony. Better to let the wedding take place -- he has waited long enough as it is. And, even when the dowry does come with the bride, all or part of it has very likely been provided by the bride herself, rather than her family. Virtually every girl spends a part of every year working away from the village once she has finished with school, and any money she earns which is neither required for her expenses while working nor needed for her family's immediate needs will be invested in her dowry.

Not all of the daughters of the Upper Nonsberg marry, but this is not regarded as a tragedy by their parents as long as the girls are provided for in some other way. Some become nuns and others succeed in finding careers as barmaids or housekeepers in the city. In St. Felix, girls who have become independent will be left out of the inheritance entirely, but girls who are still at home or in a fringe relationship will be provided with the right to a living, with usufruct, as we have seen above. In Tret it is more likely that all unmarried daughters will be included in the inheritance, each receiving an appropriate percentage of ownership in the parental lands. As long as they remain single and continue to participate in the operation of the holding, their claim to support from the land remains
intact. In fact, since their share in the holding may well be as large as any of their brothers, women are able to share in managerial decision-making in Tret. In both villages a man's sisters who have remained on the holding serve as domestic managers in lieu of a wife as long as he remains single. As they are invariably reluctant to give up this role, they may prove very difficult to deal with when a man decides that it is time for him to marry.

Girls who remain single thus retain some degree of material security, a security they are required to give up at marriage: or rather to exchange for the support of a husband's holding. Her rights in marriage are in some ways not as secure as those of an unmarried girl to her natal homestead. Should her husband die, their children, rather than she, would inherit the holding; she obtains usufruct, the right to a living from the land, but no legal control over the sale or operation of the land. And, should her husband die before any children are born, the land will be inherited by his siblings and her claim to even usufruct will be at best tenuous. A number of informants expressed the opinion that under such conditions she would have no legitimate claim to even a living from the land.

While in the majority of cases the recipient of a homestead through the inheritance process is a male, there are cases in which a woman becomes the principal heir. This is always the case where a man has only female offspring: in St. Felix thirteen of the holdings are currently held by women who inherited the property from their parents, and in Tret the number is three (see Appendix II). While a couple will rarely pass over a son in favor of a daughter, it has
happened in situations where the holding has become deeply in debt. Either the sons may decline to accept a holding threatened by debt, or the father may decide in favor of a daughter who is being courted by a young man either willing to accept the debt, or able to pay it off with money already earned: migrants returning from the Americas with bulging billfolds have on several occasions been able to obtain holdings under such circumstances. When the debt is paid off, the girl's father may treat the matter as a sale and transfer of ownership to his new son-in-law, in other cases his daughter inherits the land, the youth thus obtaining a property-owning wife, or, a compromise may be struck in which man and wife share in the ownership.

SECONDARY CLAIMS

It has been demonstrated that only a fraction of the sons and daughters of the Upper Nonsberg could depend upon the land for their material support. Assurance of such support came from inheritance of ownership of land combined with succession to the position of operator of a holding, and a variety of factors operated within the communities to sort each filial generation into heirs and disinherited (see Table 1).

Some individuals who received either no land or only a fractional claim to a holding remained full-time inhabitants of the village, living as dependents on a holding controlled by a brother (see Table 1). Some of these obtained a measure of independence by working as day laborers, operating a family grain or sawmill, or by
running a team of horses and hauling lumber, plowing, etc., for local peasants. This group shades into another, men and women who found employment in the lowlands, but were unable to reasonably anticipate constant employment and kept alive ties to their natal homestead so that they could rely upon it for temporary support during periods of unemployment. Individuals born in the Upper Nonsberg who remained in the surrounding lowlands and never in their lives were forced to spend a longer or shorter period of time as dependents on their natal homestead were not common.

Even without control of a landholding, those born in the village had various ways in which they could establish a claim to support from the land of their natal homestead on either a permanent or a temporary basis, and most owners who operated a holding within the villages had to contend with a series of actual or potential claims to support from the land which modified to some extent their own desires in its operation. The nature of these claims varied somewhat between Nones and Tyrolese villages, as did the nature of the social relations of the operator of the land to those with some sort of claim to support from his land.

In St. Felix, as already noted, the inheritance process typically established a single owner-operator for each holding. On the death or retirement of the father, all other siblings of the heir lose their legal rights to support from the holding. Subsequent claims to support from the land are based upon their kinship ties to the landowner rather than through direct legal claims upon the land. Such claims are not automatically activated by any disinherited
individual in need of support. Whether or not it is activated depends upon the decision of the landowner. His first consideration is the material well-being of his own nuclear family, the support of his siblings running a poor second. However, where the relationship is advantageous to the owner-operator of the holding, the disinherited claimant is likely to be successful. On large holdings that require more continuous labor in their operation than can be supplied by the conjugal pair working alone, residence on the homestead of a dependent sibling of the landowner who provides labor in return for support through payment in kind, can be the most economical way to obtain additional labor. This also applies where the homestead includes a sawmill or grain-mill so that a disinherited sibling can handle the milling operations in addition to being available to his brother as a laborer. Without such help the heir, because of the demands of the land, might well not be able to keep the mill in operation when it was needed. While many of these resident siblings were completely dependent on their owner-brothers, others obtained a degree of independence through operation of a mill, or by engaging in some other specialty. Tretners were often masons and men of both villages have worked as day laborers for peasants other than their brothers, obtained a team of draft animals and hired out with it, or became involved in trading livestock. However, as most Upper Nonsberg holdings are of a size that admits the support of only a single nuclear family, dependent adult siblings were always few in number.

More common was the phenomenon of fringe members of the
community, men and women who attempted to live their lives away from the villages, but who were forced to rely on partial support from their natal homesteads. Whenever employment could be found in the lowlands, these individuals would be absent from the villages, but would rely on the support of their natal homestead during periods of illness or unemployment. Again, the extent to which this was permitted by the heir depended upon whether or not such periodic support would interfere with the well-being of his own family. However, since even on smaller holdings there was periodically a need for additional labor, the relationship between heir and disinherited siblings was often mutually advantageous. In order to keep viable their claim to periodic support from the land, the disinherited would donate their labor when needed, especially in the late summer and fall when extra hands were needed to get in the harvest. This arrangement was perhaps the best possible for a peasant with little cash income: to have one or more laborers to rely on at crucial times to whom he had to pay no wages, except to feed them while they were working, and at other times when they would return home because they were temporarily unemployed.

In Tret, the system of partible inheritance caused the system of claims to support from the land to take a different form than in the Tyrolean villages. Co-resident siblings on a homestead did not usually stand as dominant decision-maker to dependent in relation to each other. Those male siblings who had not become permanent migrants at the time of their father's death usually shared equally in the legal ownership of the holding and participated in operational decision-making. Each would have an equally valid claim to ownership, to a
living from the holding, and to a voice in the operation of the holding.

Other siblings who worked in the lowlands and constituted the Tret fringe population would also share more or less equally in ownership of the holding. Their claims to temporary support from the land were therefore not dependent upon the decision of an owner-brother, but were based upon a legal right stemming from their ownership of a fractional share of the holding. Yet, to make their legal rights operational it was necessary for them to keep their ties to their at-home siblings functional by strategic donations of labor and cash. Although the legal rights of absent part OWNERS to a holding could not be ignored, those resident on the holding felt that such individuals lost all claim to a living from the land if they did not actively participate in the operation of the holding. At best their legal rights entitled them to a cash settlement. A distinction is thus made in the Nones villages between the legal right of an individual to the cash value of his share of the holding and the right to claim a living from the land. The former is conferred by legal ownership, the latter by a combination of ownership and participation in the operation of the holding. Individuals who do not keep their ties operational do not have a right to support from the land in villagers' eyes, should they return to the village. The only instances of individuals returning to one of the villages after a long absence are the cases of certain individuals who had temporarily migrated to the United States or Argentina and who returned with a roll of money. In some cases they had made donations from time to time while gone; in other cases they had not done so, but revalidated their claims to support by making a portion of their money available to the
operator upon their return.

Those who remained full-time on the land and those who left the village but remained in a fringe relationship shared an interest in keeping the holding intact and undivided: those of the heirs who remained on the holding preferred to keep the land intact so as to have as large a holding as possible for their support; while those individuals who left the village, but retained ties with their natal holding for periodic support also preferred to see it remain undivided and to retain their share of ownership in the form of a right to occasional periods of bed and board. While those resident in the village might prefer to consolidate ownership, others were content to allow partial ownership to remain in the hands of these temporary residents as it insured their continued interest in success of the operation and hence the donation of their labor at the proper times. It was also expected that these individuals would leave the ownership of their share of the holding to the offspring of their siblings who remained on the holding, since they were rarely able themselves to marry and raise families.

On the other hand, the interests of those living on the land and their fringe siblings were often opposed by other siblings who married and remained in the village, resident on their spouse's homestead. They preferred an actual division of the land in order to translate their fractional share of ownership of an entire holding into complete ownership of several parcels of land which could be worked together with their spouse's land. Wills sometimes specified that daughters retained a claim to a living from the land only so
long as they remained unmarried. With marriage their claim to a living or to a portion of the holding if it were divided lapsed and they were to be paid cash in settlement instead. However, this was not always the case, and male siblings who were fortunate enough to marry a village girl with land invariably demanded ownership of land parcels in return for relinquishing their fractional claim to the entire holding. However, despite considerable pressure from siblings resident in the village, those who remained on the holding were often able to resist division for remarkably long periods of time. This conflict of interest between siblings was a source of friction, particularly when it carried on for more than one generation. The heirs of the man who had actually worked the land would feel that they have a right to retain ownership to the entire holding and that they have only to make a cash settlement. The cousins might well argue otherwise and insist upon a division of the holding so that they could gain possession of certain parcels of land instead of cash.

CONCLUSIONS

Although villages of two distinct cultural traditions -- Tyrolese and Nônes -- are represented in this study, the area as a whole constitutes one ecological zone. Sharing common ecological problems, these villages of diverse origin have converged on a single adaptive solution. In spite of their differing ideologies, the size of holdings and the composition of the domestic unit show remarkable similarity from village to village. In Tret, ideology supported the division of larger estates into family-sized holdings, but on holdings of optimum size, holdings
which could not be divided and still remain viable, ideology and reality formed a contradiction which could be resolved only by a process which tended toward the elimination of all but one of the potential heirs. In St. Felix an ideology which required a single heir, and designated the eldest son of each sibling set as that heir, supported the necessity of maintaining optimum sized holdings intact under the management of a single person. But here too contradiction is met with in that ecological pressures tend to force the division of larger estates and on all holdings, small or large, often select for an heir other than the one designated by the ideology.

However, the inheritance ideology is not without its function here. The life goals of the landholder, both to maintain the family estate intact and to provide for all of his children, are in contradiction: it is rarely possible for a man to accomplish both, so priority must be assigned to one or the other. In Tret the ideal solution is to sacrifice the estate's continuity to make the maximum possible provision for each offspring; in St. Felix it is to sacrifice the well-being of secondary heirs to keep an estate intact in the hands of a single primary heir. But, in the setting of the Upper Nonsberg neither ideology can be matched in practice, and in attempting to follow ideological dictates, new contradictions are produced, this time by the ecological pressures mentioned above. Thus, while the inheritance ideology provides a framework within which the de facto process must operate, the details of this process and the results which it must produce are finally determined by the
pressures of environment and market.

It is thus clear that, given the ideologies, the actual process of inheritance is determined by the ecological setting. And, the ideologies are given: they cannot be derived from local circumstances. The fact that the ideologies held in the two villages are so divergent is enough to convince us of that. They arise not from adaptation on the level of the village, but in the larger cultures of which they each form but a small part. That is, which of the patterns will be preferred depends on considerations which lie outside of the circumstances of any particular village.

It has been suggested that impartibility will be favored whenever it is in the best interests of a hierarchical elite to maintain efficient management and effective production. This fits well in the Tyrol where impartibility is associated first with manorial lords who sponsored settlement of forest and high pastures from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, and who derived their support from rent collected from these holdings. Following the freeing of the peasants from manorial jurisdiction in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was the territorial rulers, interested in the maintenance of viable tax paying estates, who supported impartibility, as indicated by the laws of 1404 and 1532, renewed and strengthened in 1770 and 1785 and again in 1900 (Wolf, 1970). The will of the elite made ecological sense here as well, since viability of mountain holdings depends not only on size but on maintaining a balance of the various categories of land as well. Division of property could threaten this balance, as we have seen in the fate of marginal holdings. Impartibility and single
heir inheritance thus served the interests of landholders as well as elites. Their satisfaction with the system is well illustrated by their resistance to attempts to introduce partible inheritance first during the brief Napoleonic occupation in the early nineteenth century and again under the Fascists in the twenties and thirties of this century.

Partibility exists in the Tyrol only in those areas where intensive cultivation directed toward market sale permits the survival of dwarf estates. It is found in the Vintschgau, an area of relatively mild climate where intensive cultivation of grain is practiced, and in the still milder reaches of the Etsch valley below Bozen where land use is divided between vine and orchard. Here two to three hectares of land are sufficient to provide a family with a living.

In the Trentino, too, partible inheritance is associated with market-oriented intensive cultivation, but here the practice is extended into areas of mixed mountain agriculture as well. Eighty-three percent of all holdings in the Trentino are three hectares or smaller, and Schreiber (1948) found that these dwarf holdings are distributed through all ecological zones. This is possible only because of the proliferation of household industries, trades and crafts. While in the South Tyrol the land provides each domestic unit with all or the bulk of its needs, in the Trentino the landholder counts heavily on income from his labor or manufactures to support his family. For many, the land is only a secondary source of support. Practice in the Trentino is supported
by the elite through the application of Romanic laws requiring partibility, support for these elites depending on a tax levied against each household rather than on rents derived from landed estates.

Each of the villages in the Upper Nonsberg has retained the inheritance ideology of its larger cultural world despite the extent to which social process must go to reconcile these ideologies with the realities of village ecology. The value of this retention lies in the importance attached to the continuation of their cultural identity and the legitimacy that they attach to the ideals of that culture. Thus, while we are able to show that social processes in the Nônes and Tyrolean villages are similar in their major attributes, we are also aware of aspects of these processes which diverge. In Tret, households typically maintain an informal network of social relations both with other households in the village and in neighboring villages as well as with kinsmen who have migrated. In contrast, in St. Felix each household strives to eliminate informal ties growing out of consanguineal and affinal relationships, preferring formal contractual ties in direct dealings with other domestic groups and working through duly constituted associations whenever possible.

Central to the discussion of the inheritance process has been a view of the domestic unit in both Tret and St. Felix as a corporate entity, a group in which

The rights and obligations which attached to the deceased head of the house would attach, without breach of continuity to his successor; for, in point of fact, they would be the rights and obli-
gations of the family, and the family had the distinctive characteristic of a corporation - that it never died (Maine, 1963:179).

It is expected that the domestic group will survive in perpetuity, as each generation one of the potential heirs succeeds to management of the estate and all of the others become his dependents or leave the domestic group. The occasional addition or subtraction of a few parcels of land does not alter this process because it does not affect the rights of the social unit to the estate as a whole.

Other variants, although occurring only infrequently, are nonetheless significant. These are:

(1) Fission. When an estate is divided between two heirs, both the estate and the domestic group being split in the process, a single corporate group gives rise to two corporate groups, each of which is independent of the other.

(2) Fusion. Occasionally the heir of one estate marries the heiress of another, the two formerly independent estates being combined into a single estate in the process. However, while this arrangement may persist indefinitely, it is also possible that the estates will remain conceptually distinct and be physically separated again in a succeeding generation, each under the management of a different heir.

(3) Replacement. A domestic group may have its rights to an estate terminated either because it dies out for want of an heir or because it leaves the village for one reason or another, rights to the estate then being obtained by another domestic unit.
This could be a domestic group which migrated into the village from the outside, or one founded by a villager who has been disinherited.

(4) Termination. While the estate of a domestic group which dies out or moves away is usually kept more or less intact and taken over by another domestic group, it is also possible for the estate to be terminated as a conceptual entity. This would happen if its lands were divided up among a number of existing estates and the house-complex abandoned.

(5) Expansion. Occasionally a single domestic group has succeeded in establishing several of its members as founders of new domestic groups on separate estates taken over from terminating families. This differs from (1) in that no division of the original estate is required, and from (3) in that the new estate holder is sponsored by the membership of his natal domestic group.

The processual events which take place within the domestic group have different significance at different levels of organization of the society. Within the domestic group individuals are involved in their several strategies. These are predicated upon their variable degrees of success in establishing claims to ownership, management or support from the land. To the state, however, all of this is invisible. It sees only the de jure recording of shares of ownership, and assumes that a share of ownership provides a corresponding share of participation in the estate's affairs. The sequence of events which establishes some of these individuals in managerial control of the estate and sends others away does not take place in the jural realm, only in the domestic. When, as a result of the corporate process, the new
manager translates managerial control into ownership, the state sees this as the result of the initiation of a new legal instrument, a bill of sale or a contract of division.

But within the context of the village neither the infighting within the domestic group nor the legal record of ownership is of significance. What is of significance is the status of the individual members of the domestic group as they emerge from the domestic into the politico-jural realm, the emergence of some members of each generation as managers and others as dependent laborers. The manager may share ownership with several of his siblings, or be burdened by an obligation to make cash settlements to the disinherited. Still, it is he who will be eligible to marry someone's daughter, who will be in a position to establish labor exchange relationships, and who will represent his domestic group in all dealings within the village at large.

All others within the village are in a subordinate position with little or no power to influence decision-making. The members of the household, whether wife and children, retired parents, or disinherited siblings, are dependent on the heir by virtue of his status as manager of the estate. While the manager is established in his position by the inheritance process, his status is validated by recognition in the community at large. Management of an estate is a prerequisite to eligibility for all of the political and ceremonial honors the villages have to bestow. Thus the distribution of rewards in the local politico-jural sphere gives recognition and validation to the differentiation of individuals within the
domestic group, even though it has little if any influence on the process whereby each sibling set is sorted into heir-manager and the disinherited.

The power structure thus established in the villages serves the interests of the estate managers by providing them with a labor force which can be maintained by payment of little more than a subsistence wage. Tied to their natal holding by kinship as well as economic necessity, the disinherited identify their interests with those of their manager-brother. There is no awareness among them of shared interests, as a landless class, vis-a-vis those with land. Thus, since differences in individuals' status and power are based on differential rights to land, and since these rights are most frequently established through the inheritance process, we see the central role of inheritance in establishing and maintaining the social order in the villages.
APPENDIX I: REPRESENTATIVE HOLDINGS
IN TRET AND ST. FELIX

Each case study begins with a brief discussion of the current economic status of an estate or group of closely related estates. This is followed by a detailed, generation by generation, history of inheritance. The genealogies accompanying the case studies include only individuals who lived twenty or more years and thus figured in inheritance strategies. Generations are lettered, beginning with "A" for the most recent generation, "B" for the first ascending generation, etc. Within each generation birth order is indicated by the number appearing inside each figure. Every individual in a genealogy can thus be identified by a letter-number combination, e.g., A-2, C-4 and D-3.

Case 1: The "Mill Estate" in Tret. Although divided in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, this estate is currently one of the larger in the village, consisting of over ten hectares of land. It is competently managed by B-4, now in his early sixties. He is assisted by his wife and all five of their children, who range in age from early teens to late twenties. In addition to the subsistence income from the land, cash is earned through the daily sale of milk to a dairy and through the operation of a bar and inn. The bar was built in 1965, mainly with capital donated by the three older children who work outside of the village during the winter. It was located above the village on a mountain meadow with a scenic vista in the hopes of attracting tourists who were beginning to find their way into the valley. The venture met expectations and by 1969 had been expanded into an inn capable of providing tourists with room and board.

Generation E.

The single individual recorded for this generation probably received the holding from his father, who was also a Tret resident. Inheritance details are unknown.

Generation D.

Holding Management: 3 and 5 worked the mill together, and perhaps the land, but each passed ownership of land to his own offspring.

Others: 6 and 7 remained fringe. 1, 2, 8 and 9 left the village, while 4 married a villager in the Val di Non. Inheritance details are unknown.
Generation C.

Line I - Continued to operate the mill together with the managers in line II, but conflict developed between these cousins, including a court case over rights to land. Operation of the mill was eventually carried on by line II alone. The land associated with line I was subsequently sold, the owner leaving the village.

Line II -
Holding Management: 2 managed the holding alone. Others: 1 remained fringe until 45 years old, but died before his father. 3 and 5 migrated to South America. 4 and 6 married in the Val di Non.

Inheritance: D-5 died intestate in 1901, three sons and a daughter surviving him. The daughter (4) was paid off and the three brothers (2, 3 and 6) shared ownership.

2 - retained his share and attempted to gain ownership of the shares of his two absent brothers.
3 - retained his share, but was willing to turn it over to his brother. Before leaving for South America he gave 2 a power
of attorney so that he could do what he liked with his share. However, 2 never made use of the instrument, and at 2's death it became worthless.

6 - retained his share. Although he married into a prosperous holding in the Val di Non, 6 refused to relinquish ownership, regarding his share as a hedge against some possible but unknown future event which might deprive him of a living on his wife's estate.

Generation B.

Holding Management: 4 manages the holding alone.
Others: All five of the sisters managed to find husbands with holdings in the Val di Non, three of them marrying into one village, two into another.

Inheritance:

C-2's share. C-2 died in 1929, leaving ownership of his share of the holding to his only son, but with the stipulation that each of this son's sisters were to be paid off at one-fifth the value of the estate each. The girls all donated their shares to their brother in 1942.
C-6's share. C-6 died in 1937, his share in ownership going to his only heir, a daughter. This girl had no interest in the share, having also inherited her mother's estate, and in 1942 sold it to B-2, who then became owner of two-thirds of the estate.
C-3's share. C-3 was very successful in Argentina, working first as a laborer, then manufacturing candles in a small factory, and finally buying and operating a large cattle ranch. He married twice, leaving a total of eight offspring when he died, each of them having rights to one-eighth of their father's one-third of the Mill Estate. B-2 exchanged letters with several of these individuals, but lost track of them during the period of World War II. After the war he managed to locate them again, through the offices of the Italian consul in Argentina. The heirs that he contacted wrote back to B-4 that he could have their father's one-third, but the letters would not satisfy the Italian State, which, through its local officer in the Fondo deed's registry office, informed him he would need an affidavit relinquishing rights to the land in his favor, signed by all of the living heirs of C-3. There the matter rested until 1961, during which time four of the children of C-3 had died, increasing to twenty the number of heirs to C-3's share of the unsettled estate in Tret. In 1961, however, B-4 was visited by two of the grandchildren of C-3, both of whom had come to Italy to study in a university. One of them, a woman, turned out to be a lawyer, and she said that she would get the necessary signatures when she
returned to Argentina. She was as good as her word and collected the signatures of nineteen of the twenty, but the husband of the twentieth was suspicious: suppose the land were of great value? (His wife owns one-sixtieth of the holding!) B-4 has exchanged letters with this man, trying to explain to him how little the land is worth, and offering to pay him anything within reason. None of his offers have been accepted, and in 1965 the matter was still up in the air. However, B-4 had in the meantime found out about the "twenty-year possession law" of 1962, and in 1966 he began proceedings under this law which gave him ownership of the final share.

Case 2: Three brothers' estates in Tret. All three of these estates are very small, none having as much as a hectare of plowland and meadow, and none holding more than five hectares in all (as depicted on the map, estate number 1 holds .83 hectares, number 2 holds .70 and number 3 holds .33). None of the managers has an heir-apparent living at home who could help to ease the labor burden, so the level of operation of all three estates has declined as the men have grown older. In 1965 the youngest of the three (B-6) was in his mid-sixties and the other two were both over seventy. Only the youngest brother still keeps cattle and none try to do more with their land than raise the few crops necessary to meet their modest needs. In addition, B-2 and B-6 receive small government pension while B-5 receives some cash from the widow who lives in his apartment.
Generation D.

The single individual recorded for this generation probably received the holding from his father, who was also a village resident. Details of the inheritance are unknown.

Generation C.

Holding Management: Following the death of D in 1871 the holding was managed jointly by several of the siblings, principally 4 and 5, for about thirteen years. In 1884, 4 and 5 both married and the holding was divided, with 5 receiving the bulk of the estate.

4 later migrated to Austria and sold his apartment and land, although the apartment was later bought back by 5.

5 continued to manage the remainder of the estate and in 1922 added to it by purchasing a dwarf holding which consisted of an apartment and a few fields.

Others: 3 was fringe for a time, but later operated a combination store and inn, and since he was also the postman, with a salary from the state, was successful enough to stay in business for some time. Although he married, he had no children, and the business was sold before he died in 1910. Since then the business has had a series of managers but is still in operation.

The sisters, 1 and 2, were both married, 1 in a village in the Val di Non, and 2 in Tret.

Inheritance: Each of the five siblings in this generation inherited an equal share of ownership in the holding, but with the stipulation that the sisters should be paid off. 4 had the property divided and detached his share, one-fifth of the land and an apartment. The remainder was kept intact by 5 who eventually paid off both of the sisters and also the oldest brother.

Generation B.

Holding Management: The father, C-5 continued as manager until his death in 1934. By this time his oldest four sons were all adult with careers under way and 7, the youngest son, took over management of most of the estate.

Others: 2 became a stone mason and remained in a fringe relationship to his father's holding, a second apartment being prepared for him in his father's house when he married in 1919. When his father died he inherited a bit of land, thus becoming a "dwarf"-holder as well as a mason (this is holding number 3 on the map).
THREE ESTATES IN TRET

Map legend:  1 - land belonging to estate number 1.  
2 - land belonging to estate number 2.  
3 - land belonging to estate number 3.  

a - house-barn complex  
b - courtyard  
c - mill  
d - plowland  
e - meadowland

Lands depicted for the estates total .83 hectares for estate number 1, .70 for estate number 2 and .33 for estate number 3. In addition, each estate includes additional mountain meadows on the mountainside above the village.
3 died in a hospital as a soldier in World War I and 4 migrated to America.

5 remained in a fringe relationship to his natal holding while his father was still manager and worked all of his life as a teamster, staying in the village only occasionally. In 1937 he took in a widow and her children (her husband had been a migrant to the U. S. and had no land) and she has lived in his apartment ever since, managing the household for him.

The two sisters both married, 1 in Meran and 6 in a village in the Val di Non.

Inheritance: In an unusual move 6 was "paid off" for her share of the inheritance before the death of her father. Her husband had been involved with several other villagers in an enterprise to buy timber from peasants which they then transported to a lumbermill where it was sold. However, the venture did not prosper, and with bankruptcy inevitable, the husband feared that he would lose his estate. To avoid this, a debt to his wife's father, C-5, was fabricated, and the holding turned over to him in payment of the "debt". This estate was then presented by C-5 to his daughter B-6 as her inheritance, and she and her husband continued to work the holding as before. However, they subsequently left the village for Meran.

At his death, all of C-5's surviving children except 6 (1, 2, 4, 5, 7) plus his widow, were made heir to his estate in the following way: ownership of his patrimony, the land he had inherited from D, was divided among 1, 2, 4 and 7, but with the stipulation that the migrant son (4) and the married daughter (1) were to receive money, thus effectively giving control of the estate to 2 and 7. 2, however, was at the time more interested in his trade as a stone mason. He wanted money instead of land and an agreement was worked out between 2 and 7 whereby 2 would keep the apartment he had been living in plus a few parcels of land and be paid off for the rest of his one-half of the land. 7 thus received the other apartment (where his parents had lived) and most of the patrimonial estate, but had to pay off 1 and 4 as well as 2. 7 continues to manage this estate (number 1 on the map).

The estate which C-5 had purchased in 1922, decidedly smaller than the other, was left to his widow and 5, the teamster, one-half to each. When the widow died in 1941 all of her children inherited equal shares of her one-half of the estate, but 5 was left in control and paid the others off (number 2 on the map).

Generation A.

Generation B continues in control of the three holdings and no one stands as a successor to management of any of them. B-7 has had no
children. B-2 had several children, but the family has been filled with tragedy, all dying untimely deaths except A-2. This individual has left the village, is a full-time stone mason in Meran and does not intend to return to live in the village. He is, however, the only heir, and will inherit ownership of all three of the holdings.

The only other possible heirs would be the five children of the widow taken in by 5. However, two daughters have married outside of the village and one son has migrated to the U.S. One of the other sons works as a carpenter but visits the village at intervals, and the last was a migrant to the U.S. who returned in 1965. This latter is currently living with 5 and at the termination of the study (in 1969) had not yet decided what he would do next. However, 5 is not inclined toward leaving his estate to any of them and intends to leave it to his brother's son (A-2).

Case 3: The Forest Warden in Tret. The main source of income for this holding is derived from the salary that its owner earns as a government forester, making it one of the more prosperous in the village. The estate is small, about five hectares, and it is not operated at full capacity because the owner tends to neglect it for his forestry work. As a consequence his wife does most of the work on the land, with occasional help from other villagers. Nevertheless several cattle are kept and milk sold to the cooperative dairy in Fondo adds a significant increment to their income.
Generation C.

The single individual listed for this generation was born in Tret, but no details of his parents are known. He had a dwarf holding, but owned no buildings. An apartment and barn were rented from another villager.

Generation B.

Holding Management: 1 managed the holding after his father's death in 1903, except for periods when he was away as a temporary migrant, at which time his wife acted as manager. 1 and 2 both left the village when young, working across the Balkans, European Russia, Siberia and China. What money they could spare was sent home to their father, who purchased land in their name adjacent to that which he already owned. They returned in 1884, built a house on the land that they had purchased, and had their parents move in with them. They continued in a fringe relation to the holding, the father managing both his own land and what they had purchased. 1 and 2 customarily worked at railroad construction in the lowlands throughout these years, but 2 returned to Asia where he died in 1890. 1 migrated to America in 1905, and during the four years that he stayed there sent home money with which his wife purchased more land in the village. After returning home in 1909 he spent most of his time in the village until he died in 1922.

Others: 3 and 4 became nuns and 5 worked as a housekeeper for a family in Rovereto from 1894 until she died in 1947, a period of 53 years.

Inheritance: 1 inherited his father's land and also inherited his brother's (2) share of the land that they had purchased together. Whether the girls were paid off or not is not known.

Generation A.

Holding Management: When B-1 died in 1922 all of the children were still minors except A-1, and he had migrated to America, so his widow took over management of the holding. She continued as manager until the late 1930's when 4 took over. In 1934, at age 20, he had gone into the army and was away on the Ethiopian campaign until 1937. Since returning to the village he has managed the estate, although in 1939 he obtained a job as forester. He receives a salary for this and regards it as his primary occupation. Since his marriage to a Tyrolean girl from St. Felix in 1946 he has left management of the land up to her.

Others: 1 migrated to the U. S. in 1921 and worked as a shepherd in Western states until his death in 1953. 2 remained a resident of the holding, but died four years after her father. 3 married within Tret.
Inheritance: While all of B-1's offspring, plus his widow, shared equally in ownership of the estate, 2 soon died, leaving the widow, 1, 3 and 4, each owning one-fourth of the estate.

In 1952 4, who was then manager of the estate, paid off 3 for both her one-fourth of the estate and also for the one-third of the mother's one-quarter share, which 3 would otherwise have inherited when her mother died.

In 1953 1 died, his one-quarter ownership share being divided between his surviving siblings, 3 and 4. 4 then paid off 3 for this share, and since his mother died in the same year, he gained full ownership of the holding.

Although childless, 5 and his wife hope to adopt at least one child, and initiated adoption proceedings in 1965.

Case 4: The "Big Estate" in St. Felix. This estate has resisted division from the time of its establishment, probably in the fourteenth century, until 1965. Although now divided each of the halves are at least twice as large as any other estate in the village. In both cases the households derive their full income from the land. A-1, in his early forties, is regarded by villagers as a farmer of average skill and ambition. With nine cattle his herd is over twice the village average, but not up to the capacity of his holding. Even so his standard of living is above all but a few other households. While still deriving some support from subsistence farming, his main income is from the sale of milk to a lowland dairy. With a newly established household, his sister (A-2) and her husband have few cattle, but were working to increase their herd size and hence their income from the sale of milk.

Generation F.

The husband in this generation inherited the entire estate intact from his father, but the details of the inheritance are not known.

Generation E.

Holding Management: The second son succeeded to management, and ownership, of the entire undivided estate.

Others: The oldest son married into another village estate. The youngest son (4) and the daughter (2) left the village.

Inheritance: Details of the inheritance are not known.

Generation D.

Holding Management: The only child to survive to adulthood, a son,
inherited the estate. However, he died when his oldest child was but nine years old. His widow then married again, to a widower who sold his patrimony and came to join her on her late husband’s estate, bringing with him two sons by his first marriage. Although C-1, the eldest son of the deceased owner of the estate, inherited the entire property and had succeeded to management at least by 1868 (when he was married), the step-father remained on the holding until his death in 1881.

Generation C.

Holding Management: The only son took over management of the estate, and remained the manager until his death in 1922.
Others: The manager's two oldest sisters (2 and 3) both married estate managers in St. Felix, and the youngest married a landholder in the South Tyrol. His four half-siblings all found spouses with holdings; the two girls and a boy in St. Felix, the other half-brother in the South Tyrol.

Generation B.

Holding Management: The twin brothers and their sister all remained on the holding, one of the twins marrying two years after his father's death in 1922. He was fifty-three years old at the time of his marriage. However, the sister and his wife could not get along and two separate households were established, the married couple living in one, the sister and the other twin brother living in the other. They continued, however, to operate the holding as a single estate.

Others: The oldest brother remained on the holding, but died at the age of twenty-two.

Inheritance: The twin brothers and their sister each inherited one-third ownership of the estate.

Generation A.

Holding Management: The son succeeded to management of the estate following the deaths of his father (in 1947) and uncle (in 1951). Although he had the right to pay off his sister, she persuaded him to divide the estate, and on reaching twenty-one years of age she married a man from Unser Frau without a holding of his own and the estate was divided. The son's wife was an only child and had inherited an estate of her own, her estate and her husband's half-estate now being managed jointly.

Case 5: The estate in the woods. With less than three hectares of land, all of it of low productivity, only a single cow, and a large family, this manager (B-1) lives on the brink of total disaster.

Generation C.

This marginal dwarf-holding was put together by two brothers around the turn of the century. They were the sixth and eighth of ten children and neither had a patrimony. The land they purchased although at the same elevation as most village meadows and plowland is excessively stony and has no convenient source of water. It had not been cultivated before they bought it and had been left as forest and wasteland. An area of about 5,000 square meters was cleared for plowland and meadow and in 1902 a small house-complex
was built there. A few years after the house was built the older brother (6) migrated to America. After he returned he bought a holding in Lana and thereafter had nothing more to do with St. Felix. He had been out of contact with the village for over fifty years when he died about 1960. The younger brother thus was manager of the holding, until he died in 1947, although he shared ownership with his absent sibling.

Generation B.

The estate was enlarged by the addition of a few parcels of land inherited by his wife. C-8's only son succeeded to management of the estate and inherited ownership of his father's one-half of the holding and his mother's land as well. However, he had to make a cash settlement to his sister. He also had C-6's share to contend with, and in 1949 he bought out this absent uncle's share. In addition he was able to buy a new one-half hectare field in 1958. However, the holding will not support his family and in addition to working his land he must continually seek other sources of income. Some of the problems that he faces as a dwarf-holding manager are:

1. With insufficient plowland he can grow only garden vegetables and potatoes, no rye or wheat. Therefore, he has to buy all of his bread and do without straw for his animals.

2. With insufficient meadow he cannot grow enough hay to feed his single milk cow and two heifers and is forced to buy some
hay every year.

(3) Because she has insufficient feed his cow does not give as much milk as she should, not even enough for his children, so he must buy milk daily from other villagers.

(4) He does not own a wagon, and even if he did he could not afford to keep a draft animal or to hire one from a neighbor as needed. He transports hay, potatoes and wood from field to home in a wheelbarrow, and as a result everything takes him longer to do than it does anyone else.

In the past he has made and sold rakes and worked as a herdsman and day laborer in an attempt to make ends meet, but in recent years he has given up rake-making because it is too time consuming and he has not been offered any jobs as a herdsman for some time. He has thus been depending on income from occasional employment to supplement the inadequate income from his land, but this has been inadequate and in 1965 he was forced to sell a meadow in order to keep his family fed. By the following summer this money was gone and he hoped to go to Austria after the harvest was completed in the fall to find work as a lumberjack. However, during the summer an old bachelor uncle who had been living alone was taken mortally ill and came to the Forest Estate to spend his last days. Although completely bedridden, the old man hung tenaciously to life, and as fall approached it became obvious to the manager that he would not be able to leave for Austria in the fall. His wife could not possibly care for six children, a dying uncle-in-law, carry on her daily household chores and on top of that assume his normal winter chores of caring for the animals and cutting firewood. He did not know how he would manage to earn the additional income that he needed, but he would have to spend the winter in St. Felix. Then, in the fall while working in the mountains helping another villager get in his hay, a fully loaded hay wagon fell on him. Broken bones and internal injuries kept him hospitalized for several months. What was needed to keep the family alive was obtained on credit from the local stores and from neighbors. As the study came to an end he was struggling to regain his health. His family's mounting debts were causing him considerable worry and he had no idea how he would pay them off.

Case 6: Four estates in St. Felix. Although the original undivided estate contained over seven hectares of plowland and meadow, this land currently supports four independant households (see the accompanying map).

Estate number 1 is well managed by a man in his mid-sixties. He is assisted in its operation by his wife, who owns the estate, a
FOUR ESTATES IN ST. FELIX

Map legend:  
1 - land belonging to estate number 1.  
2 - land belonging to estate number 2.  
3 - land belonging to estate number 3.  
4 - land belonging to estate number 4.  

a - house-barn complex  
b - courtyard  
c - mill  
d - plowland  
e - meadow  
f - forest  
g - wasteland

Excluding forest and wasteland, the areas of the estates depicted here are 1.80 hectares for number 1, 3.13 hectares for number 2, 1.90 hectares for number 3, and 0.41 hectares for number 4. In addition, each of these estates hold additional parcels of meadow and forest on the mountainside above the village.
resident adult son who is the heir-apparent, and two adult daughters, both unmarried, who remain in a fringe relationship to the holding. The estate contains nearly ten hectares of land in all and provides the household with an above average income from subsistence agriculture and the sale of milk. The husband also makes and sells hay-rakes and earns a small salary as sexton of the village church.

Estate number 2 is also well managed by a man in his twenties. He is assisted by his wife, his mother, and a number of siblings still in a fringe relationship to the holding. About the same size as number one in total land holding, the family is able to derive almost all of its support from subsistence agriculture and the sale of milk, although the manager also occasionally works for neighbors as well.

Estate number 3 is small, with less than five hectares of land. Nevertheless the manager has been able to live from its output since moving in the year before the study began (1964). As in the above two cases income is derived from a combination of subsistence agriculture and the sale of milk. The manager also sometimes works for a brother who owns a sawmill.

Estate 4 also has less than five hectares of productive land. The manager is an excellent carpenter and through the years he has relied on his craft to augment the income from the land. Now in his sixties, he is semi-retired, working his land as best he can and drawing a small pension. While an adult daughter remains at home, his only son has migrated permanently to Germany.

Early History

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<tr>
<td>1824-?</td>
<td>#2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808-1866</td>
<td>#3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856-1929</td>
<td>#4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864-1937</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1846-1911</td>
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Although supporting four domestic units at the present time, the original unity of this holding is attested to by the clustering of the four house-complexes in a single building mass and by the distribution of plowland and meadow. Taken as a whole the parcels belonging to the four current holdings form a solid block of land around the buildings (see accompanying map).

The earliest documentary evidence for the holding's existence is from 1423 (Tarneller, 1909:601). During the seventeenth century it was still intact, but by the beginning of the eighteenth century the holding had been divided and was supporting two separate lines with different family names.

The Line One estate remained intact through four generations in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but during the management of the last Line One manager a feud developed between the lines. While some of the details of the feud are unknown, it is known that there was a dispute over rights to a parcel of plowland. A court case developed, and when he lost the case the Line One manager sold the rest of his holding and left the village for good, migrating with his family to Bosnia about 1875.

Line Two, meanwhile, had divided, sometime before the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The estate supporting one of these new lines (B) then remained undivided into the twentieth century, passed on each generation from father to son. In the other new line (A), ownership was passed on to a daughter (one of two siblings, both daughters). In 1803 she married and a son eventually took over management of the holding. Following his death the holding was operated by two brothers. Although the feud with Line One probably began with their father, it was during the period of their management that the court case developed, and they purchased the Line One estate when its manager left the village. Thus, during the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century this farm was supporting two independent households.

Generation C (holding 4).

Holding Management: While the two brothers (2 and 5) operated their patrimony and the estate they had purchased together, the older brother (2) was in managerial control of the estate, and in 1888 he married. Twenty-two years later the younger brother married and each took over one of the estates that they had earlier combined. As manager of the total estate, the older brother dictated the division: he took the old Line One holding leaving his patrimony to the younger brother. However, the older brother also required that the younger pay him a cash settlement.

Others: Each of the three daughters remained in a fringe relationship to the holding throughout their lives, none of them
ever marrying. 3 and 4, however, each had a son, both of whom migrated to Germany around 1930.

Generation B (holding 4).

The manager of 4 died without a will, his three daughters thus inheriting one-third ownership each, and in 1931, two years after the death of their father, they worked out a division. The oldest daughter (1), who had married into another village holding in 1921, received one-third of the land, which has since been worked together with her husband’s estate. The rest of the land and the house-complex remained intact and was managed by the other two sisters. In 1931 the youngest daughter married, her husband taking over management of the holding. The second daughter eventually left the holding, but retained her ownership share until 1962.

The man who married 3 had been the heir-apparent to another village holding, a dwarf estate, but had deserted his patrimony and migrated to Argentina. However, his father had died without writing a will, so he and his only sibling, a brother, each inherited one-half of the estate. He returned to the village in 1931 marrying the same year that he returned. After joining his wife on her estate he worked out a division with his brother, keeping about half the land and leaving the rest of the land and the buildings for his brother.
Generation A (holding 4).

The daughter, now in her thirties, remains at home with her parents, but the son has migrated to Germany. Trained as a dairyman, he now lives and works in Bavaria. Until his marriage in 1965 he sent a portion of his earnings home each month, but now that he has a family to support he is no longer able to do this. However, these remittances were used to pay off his mother's sister (B-2) in 1962. Since he had sent the money, his mother had him recorded as co-owner of B-2's share so that he now has a one-quarter ownership right to the holding.

Generation C and B (holding 1).

After his marriage, 5 managed this estate until his death in 1937. His only daughter inherited the estate and in 1940 she married a man who, as a younger brother, had been disinherited. Prior to his marriage he had spent over twenty years in a fringe relationship to his natal holding, working as a herdsman and a farm laborer outside of the village whenever he could.

Generation A (holding 1).

The oldest son remains at home and will succeed to management of the holding. The second brother is learning to be a tailor, and although he visits home occasionally he does not participate at all in the operation of the estate. Both of the girls have permanent jobs outside of the village, one working as a domestic for a family in Cles, the other as a nurses' aid in a hospital in Bozen. Both have remained in a fringe relationship to their natal holding and spend most of the summer and fall at home.

Line Two - B
Generation C.

While 1 succeeded to management of the holding, all of his siblings remained either core or fringe members of the holding except the youngest sister, 8, who became a nun. The domestic group consisted of three households: 1 and his wife and children lived in one, two brothers and a sister (3, 4 and 6) lived in a second, and another brother, 7, lived alone in a third. The first two households consisted of apartments in the main building, the third of a room in a mill some distance from the main house. The three households worked the land jointly and while 7 managed the mill, which was used not only by neighbors in St. Felix but by people in neighboring villages as well, all of the brothers worked there as needed. 3, 4 and 5 had all gone to South America about 1890 and had sent money home which was used to buy more land, but they returned to the village to stay within a few years.

In 1911 the oldest brother died, his son and heir being only seven years old at the time. However, with so many adults on the holding there was no trouble keeping it in operation and 4, who became the new manager of the estate, was appointed guardian of the children. This brother died in 1918, and another took his place. The last of the siblings had died by 1937, but 1's son had taken over management in 1933, the year that he married.

The brothers 2 and 5 were both in a fringe relationship to the holding, 2 working as an animal dealer and 5 as a teamster. 2 eventually became completely independent but 5 remained in the fringe all his life.

Generation B.

Since each of the Generation C siblings who had remained on the holding had held an ownership share, the details of the inheritance are involved. The end result, however, was that the son inherited one-quarter ownership outright, his sister inherited one-quarter and they shared ownership of the remaining one-half. The son succeeded to management of the entire holding and was to pay a cash settlement to his sister for her ownership share. Meanwhile the sister married into another village holding and left home.

Generation A.

B-2 died in 1956 and his oldest son (3) succeeded to management of his father's estate. Until 1961, when 3 married, the holding was operated by the sibling set. However, B-2 had never succeeded in paying off his sister, and in 1964 a problem arose because of this. His sister, B-1, decided that since she had not been paid off that she had a right to claim ownership of one-half of the estate. Four of her five sons all had an estate or other occupation and she wanted the estate for the fifth son. The siblings living
on the holding did not think her claim was legitimate, but did not stop her when she moved her son and his wife into one of the apartments in the building. An informal agreement on land division has been worked out, but the heirs of B-2 had refused to legalize the division by registering it with the state as of the termination of the study in 1967. When revisited in 1969, both sides were in the process of investigating the legality of their claims, but it appeared at that time that B-1's son would have to relinquish at least some of this land to A-3.
APPENDIX II: SOURCES OF MANAGERIAL RIGHTS TO CURRENT ESTATES

In Tret:

I. Tret holdings obtained through inheritance

   A. Inheritance of estates which were not divided
      1. Only son succeeded father as manager
      2. Eldest of several sons succeeded father as manager
      3. Only son or eldest son succeed to management of estate owned by his mother
      4. Son other than oldest succeeded father as manager
      5. Son other than eldest succeeded to management of holding owned by mother
      6. Manager obtained managerial rights from other than a parent (male heir - from a brother)
      7. A daughter inherited the estate because there were no available male siblings
      8. A daughter inherited the estate from a parent, with one or more male siblings passed over
      9. A female owner who inherited the holding from other than a parent (one from Hu's siblings, one from deceased Hu's Fa)
     10. Management is by a sibling set which includes the oldest brother
11. Management by a sibling set which does not include the oldest brother 4

B. Inheritance of estates which were divided 6

1. Managed by oldest son; inherited from father 2

2. Managed by son other than the oldest; inherited from father 3

3. Manager obtained estate from other than father 1

II. Tret holding obtained by other than inheritance 19

A. Traditional estate obtained by purchase 8

1. Holding obtained intact 5

2. Holding divided into two estates, each obtained by purchase 3

B. Composite estates 9

C. Manager rents the estate 1

D. Other 1

| Total number of estates in Tret | 50 |

In St. Felix:

I. St. Felix holdings obtained through inheritance 51

A. Inheritance of estates which were not divided 41
1. Only son succeeded father as manager | 8
2. Eldest of several sons succeeded father as manager | 2
3. Only son or eldest son succeeded to management of estate owned by mother | 0
4. Son other than eldest son succeeded father as manager | 8
5. Son other than eldest succeeded to management of estate owned by mother | 3
6. Manager inherited managerial rights from other than a parent (from a guardian, 5 cases; from mother's brother, one case) | 6
7. A daughter inherited the estate because there were no available male siblings | 6
8. A daughter inherited the estate from a parent with one or more male siblings passed over | 2
9. A female owner who inherited the estate from other than a parent | 1
10. Management by a sibling set which includes the oldest brother | 1
11. Management by a sibling set which does not include the oldest brother | 4

B. Inheritance of holdings which were divided | 10
1. Managed by oldest son; inherited from father | 4
2. Managed by son other than the oldest; inherited from father 1
3. Ownership inherited by daughter; inheritance from father 2
4. Inherited from other than a parent 3

II. St. Felix holdings obtained by other than inheritance 11

A. Traditional estate obtained by purchase 2
   1. Holding obtained intact 2
   2. Holding divided, each obtained by purchase 0

B. Composite estates 7

C. Manager rents the estate 1

D. Other 1

| Total number of estates in St. Felix | 62 |
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