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Comparative Dynamics of a Traditional Serbian Village: Oraciac 1863 to 1975

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Comparative Dynamics of a Traditional Serbian Village

Oraciac 1863 to 1975

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I. Purposes of this Research

Oraciac is a Serbian Village which has remained kin group stable while being emerged in the upheavals of twentieth century Europe. While remaining stable on this single kin level, this village has experienced many changes in social, economic and demographic trends-which have altered the social system of the village over time. It is these changes in the ~~kin~~ village social system during the latter part of the 19th century and throuout the 20th century which is the focus of this ongoing research into community or village dynamics.

Analysis of the dynamics of the Serbian village in transition is of necessity multi-level analysis. On the level of demographic time series trends, this research proposes to investigate trends in population size as a consequence of ~~this village's~~ impact of war and modernization in southeastern Europe. It also proposes to investigate over time patterns in family fertility, family emigration ^{and} as a consequence of the industrialization of this segment of eurpoe and the rationalization of agriculture into largex unit farming . Trends and changes in the death rate of the village also play an important part in the explanation of the distribution of village wealth. The circulation of women throughout the kin groups and the marriage links which socially bond the villagers together also will form a part of this research.

6 The dynamics of the village stratification system ~~also~~ is the second level of analysis. The distribution of wealth - in terms of landholdings - is a central feature of the stability pattern of the kinship structure of this village. Previous research (Halpern) ^{suggested} has ~~shown~~ that the distribution of wealth and the stability of kin structures over time is related. This research will quantatively investigate this hypothesis by a time comparison analysis. Also the distribution

of modern non-traditions sources of status (eg. education) within the village. Also the creation of new occupational categories over time as a source of prestige and family and kin stability is also a topic of investigation in this research.

The third level of analysis is that of the level of the kinship group and lineage. Halpern () has described a village situation which is persistently stable over time in Oraciac, Persuing this description into the quantitative realm comparing and contrasting lineages, their size and composition over time . This aspect of the analysis means relating kinship maps to the total system of demographic and stratification ~~systems~~ and as a consequence of this linkage placing the individual villager within a spacial and temporal frame of reference for the fourth aspect of analysis - the investigation of individual life cycles.

Life cycle research places the individual in a variety of roles which change over time. These roles relate to the individuals position in the kinship, community and family structure at any given time. Demographic and social structural changes exist in a mutually causal relationship altering the life cycle roles and at the same time altering the number of individuals which may be encumbered into these roles. This research also will investigate the changin duration of role incumbancy over time.

In summary this research will provide a model for the investigation of kinship, demographic and socio-economic systems in an open systems framework. ~~which~~ The impact of changes in these systems on the individual life cycle then follows as the village roles change not only qualatiativey - as in the appearence of new occupations, but also quantativtly in the duration of role incumbancy for the individual.

II. Previous Research

Research into the quantitative dynamics of the village society is limited to the descriptive works of Halpern (). From these anthropological studies, Halpern has uncovered a variety of trends in the village of Oraciac. In regards to family or household composition over time, case studies revealed the compression of lateral kinship linkages while the multi-generational extended family has remained at the three or four generation level. In other words, fewer family relations at each generational level form a household unit while the older parents and grandparents still maintain the status as head of household regardless of income source. In regards to fertility trends, case studies of individual kin groups has revealed a complex trend towards larger families during the latter part of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th but now tending toward a lower number of births per marriage. Finally in regards to emigrational trends the modern increase in industrialization in Europe has drawn many household heads and intact family units away from the village either on a partial basis (head of household temporarily leaves to find work) or totally with ~~the~~ family emigration becoming a more pronounced trend. These insights from the case study of individual kinship structures in Oraciac will be tested in this proposed research.

III. Methodological Considerations

Previous NSF and NIMH funding has provided for the collection and coding of data on Oraciac. As a result over 25 separate data sources, ranging from census data to oral genealogies have been collected and coded. During this past year all data sets have been exhaustively checked for their reliability and are now operational.

This funding has also provided for cross-sectional analysis of the data producing descriptive analysis and reports. On attempt at the analysis of comparative time series or any trend analysis was included in this previous work.

The methodology for this study of village dynamics may only be accomplished through the linking and appending of a variety of data sources into two types of time series data files. The first type of time series file links all individuals comparatively over time. In other words an individual's roles and statuses in 1928 may be linked to those in 1953 and changes may be investigated. Similarly by linkage and aggregation to the level of the family or kinship group changes in fertility, family size and composition may be investigated. The second type of time series linkage is the ego oriented summary record. This data file assumes that an individual during his/her lifetime exists in a complex web of kin relations both generational and lateral. By generational aggregation (there are up to 8 generations available in the Oraciac data), these eight groups may be compared across time to ascertain changes in kin-role composition. From these two time oriented data sets, the research purposes outlined above may be accomplished.

Analysis of these data files will employ standard statistical tools, and the time series format of the data also provides for the formulation of mathematical models -particularly in regards to role incumbency changes over time.