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**Property Devolution in Tuscany** Inheritance is often depicted as a key social event in preindustrial societies. By transferring land between generations—in this context, the primary means of economic survival, and, as a result, an independent household—inheritance influenced age at marriage, household structure, intergenerational power differentials, and the size of land holdings. Instead of assuming these effects, this article builds on suggestions implicit in previous research to show that the importance of inheritance is variable, not fixed.<sup>1</sup>

Much empirical work supports the view that inheritance is a central event in certain social contexts and that it is linked to demographic and social practices. Impartible inheritance is associated with larger and more complex households and later age at marriage; partible inheritance is associated with smaller, nuclear households and earlier age at marriage. The timing of inheritance is crucial for intergenerational power differences. Parents who retained control over the land until their death reduced their children's autonomy. Wage labor or protoindustrialization, which severs the tie between economic survival and access to land through inheritance, changes intergenerational relations and household structure. This view of inheritance is rooted in Marx's

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1 Edward V. Carroll and Sonya Salamon, "Share and Share Alike: Inheritance Patterns in Two Illinois Farm Communities," *Journal of Family History*, XIII (1988), 219–232; Bernard Derouet, "Nuptiality and Family Reproduction in Male-Inheritance Systems: Example of the Franche-Comté (Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries)," *History of the Family*, I (1996), 139–158; Susan Carol Rogers and Salamon, "Inheritance and Social Organization among Family Farmers," *American Ethnologist*, X (1983), 529–550; Zvi Razi, "The Myth of the Immutable English Family," *Past & Present*, 140 (1993), 3–44.

and Weber's views of the transition to capitalism, which created wage labor and markets, erasing the link between inheritance and economic survival found in the preindustrial setting. A stronger version of this argument contends that protoindustrialization was facilitated by some forms of inheritance, especially partible inheritance that led to small scattered holdings requiring supplementation by wage labor and marked by weakened parental authority, and impartible inheritance that dispossessed non-heirs. A related argument links partible inheritance to land fragmentation, population growth, emigration, and/or economic stagnation.<sup>2</sup>

Other studies discuss the equitable division of inheritance in regions of partible inheritance, how land was kept intact for economic or cultural reasons, how provisions were made for noninheriting offspring in regions of impartible inheritance, how families arrived at heirship strategies, how the timing of inheritance was determined (at marriage or death), and how the older generation tried to arrange for retirement. Implicit in many studies is the imperative of having a male heir to inherit the patrimony, thus preserving the family's lineage and property. Empirical evidence also confirms the primacy of male heirs. Even in regions

2 Lutz K. Berkner, "The Stem Family and the Developmental Cycle of the Peasant Household: An Eighteenth-Century Austrian Example," *American Historical Review*, LXXVII (1972), 398–418; *idem*, "Inheritance, Land Tenure and Peasant Family Structure: A German Regional Comparison," in Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, and Edward P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance* (Cambridge, 1976), 71–95; E. R. Brennan, A. V. James, and W. T. Morrill, "Inheritance, Demographic Structure, and Marriage: A Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Journal of Family History*, VII (1982), 289–298; Glenn Deane, "Parents and Progeny: Inheritance and the Transition to Adulthood in Colonial North Carolina, 1680–1759," *History of the Family*, I (1996), 353–374; Stephen John Gross, "Handing Down the Farm: Values, Strategies, and Outcomes in Inheritance Practices Among Rural German Americans," *Journal of Family History*, XXI (1996), 192–217; H. John Habakkuk, "Family Structure and Economic Change in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *Journal of Economic History*, XV (1955), 1–12; J. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in David V. Glass and David E. C. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History* (London, 1965), 101–143; *idem*, "Two Kinds of Pre-Industrial Household Formation System," *Population and Development Review*, VIII (1982), 449–494; David I. Kertzer, "Household History and Sociological Theory," *Annual Review of Sociology*, XVII (1991), 155–179; Franklin Mendels, "Proto-industrialization: The First Phase of the Industrialization Process," *Journal of Economic History*, XXXII (1972), 241–261; Martine Segalen, *Fifteen Generations of Bretons: Kinship and Society in Lower Brittany 1720–1980* (Cambridge, 1991), 83–84; Àngels Torrents, "Marriage Strategies in Catalonia from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century: A Case Study," *Continuity and Change*, XIII (1998), 475–496; Michel Verdon, "The Stem Family: Toward a General Theory," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, X (1979), 87–105; Simone A. Wegge, "To Part or Not to Part: Emigration and Inheritance Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Hesse-Cassel," *Explorations in Economic History*, XXXVI (1999), 30–55.

where male and female heirs were formally, or potentially, equal, males were often preferred. These studies often go beyond “structural” approaches to inheritance that consider the aggregate correlations between inheritance, household structure, and age of marriage by adopting a “strategic” or “processual” approach that makes use of historical ethnographic evidence. Structural and strategic approaches, however, often retain a common emphasis on the primacy of inheritance in social life.<sup>3</sup>

Other studies go beyond structural approaches by noting either empirical inconsistencies in these relationships or conceptual difficulties. The main analytical distinction between impartible and partible inheritance is frequently called into question, because the boundary between them is blurry or because the formal or legal inheritance system is distinct from actual practice. Other studies criticize the use of broad categories and regional generalizations (for example, Western European marriage pattern) in the face of considerable local diversity. Some call for the abandonment of aggregate or correlational studies of inheritance, which, for example, link partible inheritance to nuclear households and impartible inheritance to stem households. Brettell argues in favor of a transactional approach to replace this type of work. Guinnane advocates less reliance on the neo-Malthusian model that underlies much of this historical demographic research in favor of a neoclassical economic framework. The search for alternative analytical terms explains the popularity of strategic analyses and the debate about their advantages over structural ones. Verdon labels a similar

3 Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, “The Stem Family in the French Basque Country: Sare in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Family History*, XXII (1997), 50–69; Berkner, “Stem Family”; Rolande Bonnain, “Houses, Heirs, and Non-heirs in the Adour Valley: Social and Geographic Mobility in the Nineteenth-Century,” *History of the Family*, I (1996), 273–295; Pierre Bourdieu, “Marriage Strategies as Strategies of Social Reproduction,” in Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (eds.) (trans. Elborg Forster and Patricia M. Ranum), *Family and Society: Selections from the Annales* (Baltimore, 1976), 117–144; Caroline B. Brettell, *Men Who Migrate, Women Who Wait: Population and History in a Portuguese Parish* (Princeton, 1986); J. Davis, *Land and Family in Pisticci* (London, 1973), 111, 119–145; Deane, “Parents and Progeny,” 361; Jack Goody (with C. A. Harrison), “Strategies of Heirship,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XV (1973), 3–20; Gross, “Handing Down the Farm”; Gregory Hanlon and Elspeth Carruthers, “Wills, Inheritance and the Moral Order in the 17th-Century Agenais,” *Journal of Family History*, XV (1990), 149–161; Kertzer and Brettell, “Advances in Italian and Iberian Family History,” *Journal of Family History*, XII (1987), 87–120; Segalen, *Fifteen Generations*, 62; Barry Stapleton, “Family Strategies: Patterns of Inheritance in Odiham, Hampshire, 1525–1850,” *Continuity and Change*, XIV (1999), 385–402; Torrents, “Marriage Strategies.”

debate as structural versus processual, to characterize the positions of, and research following, Laslett and Berkner, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

This article attempts to resolve the empirical anomalies, as well as the epistemological differences between structural and strategic approaches, by conceiving inheritance as variable in effect, even in preindustrial agricultural societies, because of other mediating social factors. This conceptualization is founded on Rogers and Salamon, who consider adherence to inheritance practices a key social variable. Similarly, Razi notes the conditions under which holdings may not be transmitted by inheritance at all. This article addresses the historical demographic literature by considering when an emphasis on inheritance as a form of property devolution, and its associated analytical categories, may or may not be useful. Instead of depending on either structural or strategic analyses, it employs both.<sup>5</sup>

Land markets, wealth, and mortality helped to determine whether inheritance had a large impact. Well-developed land markets (even when not fully capitalist) especially in combination with partible inheritance facilitated the exchange of land among rural inhabitants. Such individuals often showed little attachment to particular pieces of land. High mortality also diminishes the effects of inheritance. Where mortality is high, the overlap between generations is relatively small and the average number of heirs is relatively low. Thus, the possibilities of extended household formation are limited, regardless of inheritance practices, and the

4 Berkner, "Stem Family"; *idem*, "Inheritance"; *idem* and Mendels, "Inheritance Systems, Family Structure, and Demographic Patterns in Western Europe, 1700–1900," in Charles Tilly (ed.), *Historical Studies of Changing Fertility* (Princeton, 1978), 209–223; Brettell, "Kinship and Contract: Property Transmission and Family Relations in Northwestern Portugal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XXXIII (1991), 443–465; Bourdieu, "Marriage Strategies"; Emigh, "Theorizing Strategies: Households and Markets in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany," *History of the Family*, VI (2001), 495–517; Lucia Ferrante, "Strutture o strategie? Discussione sulla storia della famiglia," *Quaderni storici*, XIX (1984), 613–626; Timothy Guinnane, "Re-Thinking the Western European Marriage Pattern: The Decision to Marry in Ireland at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Family History*, XVI (1991), 47–64; Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Ties That Bind: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York, 1986), 78; Kertzer and Brettell, "Advances," 96; Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (London, 1965); Phyllis Moen and Elaine Wethington, "The Concept of Family Adaptive Strategies," *Annual Review of Sociology*, XVIII (1992), 233–251; Richard L. Rudolph, "The European Family and Economy: Central Themes and Issues," *Journal of Family History*, XVII (1992), 119–138; Segalen, *Fifteen Generations*, 59–87; Verdon, *Rethinking Households: An Atomistic Perspective on European Living Arrangements* (New York, 1998), 30–31.

5 Derouet, "Nuptiality," 151; Razi, "Myth," 37; Rogers and Salamon, "Inheritance."

number of claimants on the patrimony is small. Epstein shows that in medieval Genoa, although testators favored sons, daughters were often heirs because families frequently had no surviving male offspring. Martin shows that low life expectancies (often in combination with other demographic factors) facilitate matrilineal and lateral property devolution, even when patrilineal devolution is normative.

Within communities, the effects of inheritance depended on household wealth. The landless and poor, because they had little to inherit, tended to exhibit patterns of marriage and household structure different than others in the community, often residing in nuclear families regardless of inheritance practices. Some wealthy families tried more strenuously to keep their patrimonies intact than poor families. Wealth, however, permitted other parents to divide the patrimony between offspring and to provide each with a sufficient inheritance to establish a separate household. Finally, flexible systems gave considerable authority to individuals; in the absence of strong cultural imperatives, different parents adopted different practices. Partible systems were generally less restrictive than impartible ones. Under systems of partible inheritance, the relationship between various demographic factors was often negligible.<sup>6</sup>

INHERITANCE IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY TUSCANY Claims about the effects of inheritance can be assessed using evidence from rural, fifteenth-century Tuscany. In this context, extremely high mortality, flexible partible inheritance, and local markets for land mitigated the effects of inheritance observed elsewhere. As Kuehn

6 Brennan and Morrill, "Inheritance"; Deane, "Parents and Progeny," 360; Steven Epstein, *Wills and Wealth in Medieval Genoa, 1150–1250* (Cambridge, 1984), 82–84; Philip T. Hoffman, *Growth in a Traditional Society: The French Countryside, 1450–1815* (Princeton, 1996); Kertzer, "Household History," 165–166; Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist* (Chicago, 1988); John F. Martin, "The Relationship of Inheritance Systems to Genealogical Structures and Male Longevity," *Journal of Family History*, XIX (1984), 291–307; Mavis E. Mate, "The East Sussex Land Market and Agrarian Class Structure in the Late Middle Ages," *Past & Present*, 139 (1993), 46–65; Dennis R. Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1980); Rogers and Salamon, "Inheritance"; Teofilo F. Ruiz, *Crisis and Continuity: Land and Town in Late Medieval Castile* (Philadelphia, 1994); David Warren Sabean, *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge, 1990); Segalen, *Fifteen Generations*, 60, 85; Stapleton, "Family Strategies," 397; Robert Wheaton, "Family and Kinship in Western Europe: The Problem of the Joint Family Household," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, V (1975), 601–628.

notes, the examination of inheritance, as well as the assumption of its importance, has played a major role in the historiography of Renaissance Italian city-states. In Tuscany, property devolution was bilateral, including partible postmortem inheritance for men and dowry at the time of marriage for women. Joint ownership of property by siblings was common. Though inheritance was partible, stereotypically giving equal shares to all male heirs, testaments frequently specified that land was to be held undivided and in common by heirs. Thus, partible inheritance in this context often led to large, joint households, especially among the wealthy. Legal statutes favored male over female inheritance. In instances of intestacy, women could inherit legally only a portion—no more than one-quarter—of the estate; the rest went to male relatives of the deceased within eight degrees—including sons, grandsons, great-grandsons, father, paternal grandfather, paternal uncles, and brothers. Women were also legally entitled to a “suitable” dowry (as well as support from their natal family before marriage and during widowhood, if they returned to this family). Florentine statutes throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries progressively limited matrilineal inheritance.<sup>7</sup>

Dowries were a universal component of the cultural field—no dowry, no marriage. Although the provision of a dowry was never questioned, the families of the future bride and groom often engaged in heated negotiations about the size and composition of the dowry, as well as the timing and terms of its exchange and restitution, even after the marriage had taken place. Dowries ranged from a nonmonetary token among the impoverished to an enormous fortune among wealthy Florentines. Although the dowry legally belonged to the wife, and was generally inherited by her children, it was managed by her male relatives.<sup>8</sup>

7 Judith Brown, *In the Shadow of Florence: Provincial Society in Renaissance Pescia* (New York, 1982), 37; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1985), 19; Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family, and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1991), 239, 241–243; *idem*, “Law, Death, and Heirs in the Renaissance: Repudiation of Inheritance in Florence,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, XLV (1992), 484–516.

8 Gene Brucker, *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study* (New York, 1971), 29–30; Kuehn, “Understanding Gender Inequality in Renaissance Florence: Personhood and Gifts of Maternal Inheritance by Women,” *Journal of Women’s History*, VIII (1996), 58–80; Anthony Molho, “Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women’s Ages,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, XLI (1988), 193–217; *idem*, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, 1994), 12, 128–143. Difficulties with the restitution of dowries often followed a husband’s death, even though restitution was required by law, and difficulties

Similarly, property devolution through inheritance was not always straightforward. The existence of a testament did not necessarily prevent family arguments; it was often the starting point for extensive litigation. In fact, high mortality assured that many families would have no male heirs, raising the possibility of female succession as well as legal disputes. Florentine laws concerning the details of female inheritance were subject to considerable interpretation, and legal decisions sometimes supported female over male rights.<sup>9</sup>

Tuscany provides a particularly interesting case, not only because inheritance is often hypothesized to play a central role there, but also because the region exhibited two unusual demographic characteristics in comparison to other European regions. First, Tuscans exhibited a relatively large age gap between spouses—early age at marriage for women and late age at marriage for men. Second, a relatively large proportion of Tuscans lived in extended families. The cultural practices associated with partible patrilineal inheritance combined with laws favoring male heirs and with demographic factors supporting male authority because of the age gap between spouses. Tuscan families can be described as patriarchal; formal and informal authority transferred to co-resident male offspring at the death of the elder male.<sup>10</sup>

Although age at marriage and household structure varied by regional and social characteristics, these demographic patterns displayed a notable distinctiveness throughout Tuscany. For example, household extension may have been more common among the wealthy (especially among the Florentine patriciate and the land-owning peasantry), whereas the poor were more likely to establish a new (presumably nuclear) household at marriage. Nevertheless, a relatively high percentage of household extension across a wide

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with the devolution of the property represented by the dowry often ensued when a wife predeceased her husband (Julius Kirshner, "Maritus Lucretur Dotem Uxoribus Sue Premortue in Late Medieval Florence," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, CVIII [1991], 111–155). Negotiations concerning non-dotal assets of women were often complicated (Kirshner, "Material for a Gilded Cage: Non-Dotal Assets in Florence, 1300–1500," in Kertzer and Richard P. Saller [eds.], *The Family in Italy: From Antiquity to the Present* [New Haven, 1991], 184–385).

9 Kuehn, *Law*, 15, 239, 243, 246–254; *idem*, "Law," 487.

10 David Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven, 1985), 204–211, 292; Kirshner and Molho, "The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence," *Journal of Modern History*, L (1978), 403–438; Klapisch-Zuber, *Women*, 19.

range of urban and rural social groups is evident. Similarly, age at first marriage was somewhat older in Florence than elsewhere in Tuscany (especially for men), but it displayed the same overall pattern throughout the region. Rural areas exhibit less variability. For example, the differences in household structure and age at marriage between smallholders and sharecroppers—the difference in tenancy often coinciding with the difference between partible and impartible inheritance—was small. Households of sharecroppers tended to be larger than those of smallholders; whether the indivisibility of the tenurial form or the labor requirements of sharecropping was responsible is not clear.<sup>11</sup>

Wheaton linked these demographic characteristics of household extension and age at marriage to patrilineal kinship systems. In several societies, including fifteenth-century Tuscany, large extended households were a dimension of a kinship system that emphasized, especially among the wealthy, the relationship between father and sons and between brothers. Such relationships were significant among wealthy families. Given these demographic characteristics and this type of kinship system, father-to-son inheritance could be normative. Goldschmidt and Kunkel distinguished between patrilineal impartible inheritance, which is generally associated with stem families, and patrilineal partible inheritance, which is generally associated with joint families. The latter system seems to represent the general outlines of the kinship system in fifteenth-century Tuscany.<sup>12</sup>

Empirical evidence supports Wheaton's claim about the importance of the patrilineal property devolution in Tuscany. Cohn showed that Florentine wills placed the most emphasis on preserving the patrimony through the male lineage, often naming distant male relatives as heirs instead of daughters. Testators followed similar practices in Arezzo and Perugia. In Pisa, Assisi, and Siena,

11 Emigh, "Land Tenure, Household Structure, and Fertility: Aggregate Analyses of Fifteenth-Century Rural Tuscan Communities," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, XVII (1997), 220–254; *idem*, "Land Tenure, Household Structure, and Age at Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XXVII (1997), 613–535; *idem*, "Labor Use and Landlord Control: Sharecroppers' Household Structure in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, XI (1998), 37–73; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 86–88; 210, 282–298; Klapisch-Zuber, *Women*, 19.

12 Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., *Women in the Streets: Essays on Sex and Power in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore, 1996), 8–15; Walter Goldschmidt and Evalyn Jacobson Kunkel, "The Structure of the Peasant Family," *American Anthropologist*, LXXIII (1971), 1058–1076; Klapisch-Zuber, *Women*, 56; Wheaton, "Family and Kinship," 625–627.

however, especially before the plagues of the mid-fourteenth century, there were fewer restrictions on the division or alienation of patrimonial property; daughters were more often chosen as heirs over distant male relatives. Although Cohn found some regional variation within Tuscany and nearby cities, the general patrilineal pattern of inheritance favoring male heirs was also apparent. Females and males inherited equal shares in only 13 percent of the cases in which parents had surviving sons and daughters. Kent showed how several distinguished Florentine families attempted to retain property within a patriline. Molho also emphasized the importance of the patriline and patrimony for Florentines, explaining how marriage alliances, and the dowries brought to the patriline through marriage, were crucial in allowing certain Florentine families to maintain prominence over many centuries. Klapisch-Zuber stressed the cultural importance of the patrilineal system but also noted the large gap between ideals and practices in this system. She argued that only a minority of households actually exhibited patrilineal characteristics.<sup>13</sup>

Brown maintained that age at marriage was delayed for males in rural Pesciatine regions because partible inheritance fragmented the land into small portions that did not support a family. Males delayed marriage until they could combine a small inheritance at the time of their father's death with purchased or leased land. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, families increasingly attempted to, and succeeded in, keeping their patrimonies intact.<sup>14</sup>

Wealthy Florentines may have been able to preserve their patrilines and patrimonies, but not so rural peasants. Furthermore, partible inheritance may not always have had the effects that Brown hypothesized for the region near Pescia. Mazzi and Raveggi's examples of Tuscan rural inhabitants in the Florentine *contado* provide little evidence that peasants were able to use inheritance to preserve a patriline or a patrimony, or even to establish descendents in a consistent way. High mortality reduced the number of surviving heirs to the point of virtually extinguishing some patrilines. High mortality also limited the number of extended

13 Cohn, *The Cult of Remembrance and the Black Death* (Baltimore, 1992), 197; Francis William Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1977), 135–149; Klapisch-Zuber, *Women*, 55–56; Molho, “Marriage Alliance,” 9, 171–178, 344–345.

14 Brown, *In the Shadow*, 40–41.

households, even in the presence of partible, patrilineal inheritance practices that might otherwise have facilitated joint family formation. Given high mortality, partibility had little effect of fragmenting holdings, at least on average. Minors were the recipients of inheritances.<sup>15</sup>

The property acquired through inheritance was certainly not trivial, but it was not necessarily larger, nor more important, than what was obtained through purchase or lease. For example, Balestracci's analysis of the del Massarizia peasant family from the region around Siena shows that some family members cultivated considerably more land obtained through lease and purchase than through inheritance, depending on their entrepreneurial skills. At least one purchase reconsolidated land that had been divided through inheritance. In fact, inheritances were not always even useful. Mazzi and Raveggi give an example of a rural inhabitant—like certain Florentines—who did not accept his inheritance, consisting primarily of debts.<sup>16</sup>

Rural elites may have had more success in maintaining their patrimonies. In Poppi, a town in the Casentino, Benadusi argued that the elite were more slow to abandon partible inheritance practices in favor of the impartible ones that became widespread in Tuscany through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet, because of relatively high mortality rates and endogenous marriage practices, patrimonies were often reconsolidated, thus strengthening certain lineages. The number of marriages in a generation was also limited by the placing of offspring in religious orders. Such marriage practices were remarkably similar to those of the Florentines described by Molho.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, cultural and demographic practices in fifteenth-century Tuscany seem to suggest that father-to-son inheritance was be a key social event and that it preserved the patriline and the patrimony. Families, however, were not necessarily able to implement this form of inheritance evenly, nor was it necessarily central to social life. Wealthy Florentines seemed to have been more suc-

15 Klapisch-Zuber, *Women*, 57; Maria Serena Mazzi and Sergio Raveggi, *Gli uomini e le cose nelle campagne fiorentine del Quattrocento* (Florence, 1983), 239–315.

16 Duccio Balestracci, *La zappa e la retorica: Memorie familiari di un contadino toscano del Quattrocento* (Florence, 1984), 43–101; Kuehn, “Law”; Mazzi and Raveggi, *Gli uomini*, 307.

17 Giovanna Benadusi, “Rethinking the State: Family Strategies in Early Modern Tuscany,” *Social History*, XX (1995), 157–178; *idem*, *A Provincial Elite in Early Modern Tuscany* (Baltimore, 1996), 128–133; Klapisch-Zuber, *Women*, 20; Molho, *Marriage Alliance*, 344–345.

cessful than poor peasants in maintaining patriline, perhaps using marriages and purchases to reconsolidate assets. Furthermore, it is not clear how inheritance affected age at marriage or household structure. Although the historical demographic literature suggests that partible inheritance led to lower age at marriage, on average, and to nuclear families, the particularities of the partible system in Tuscany meant that some heirs with equal shares were required to hold the patrimony jointly and often formed laterally extended (joint) households. Thus, partibility may not have had the effect of lowering age at marriage and facilitating nuclear households as it did elsewhere. Moreover, such joint inheritance may have produced few joint households, because high mortality reduced the number of surviving heirs. Indeed, comparisons by land tenure (a substitute for impartibility and partibility) show few differences in age at marriage and household structure, suggesting that the receipt of inheritance per se had relatively little effect on demographic practices. Finally, wealth, high mortality, and well-developed land markets were intervening factors that reduced the effects of inheritance. Hence, some empirical studies may confirm Wheaton's hypothesis that inheritance should be a crucial social event in the context of Tuscany's patrilineal system, but other studies suggest that these effects may not have been found among the majority of the relatively impoverished Tuscan peasantry.<sup>18</sup>

Providing evidence for rural Tuscan smallholders in the fifteenth century is not an easy task. Rural areas were not well documented (especially in comparison to Florence). Research that focuses on Florence or other relatively urbanized regions may not apply to rural Tuscany. Detailed longitudinal data giving the exact timing of events (household formation, age at marriage, and receipt of inheritance) would enable a precise investigation of hypotheses about the effects of inheritance, but they do not exist; nor are they likely to be obtained from existing archival documents for a large number of cases. Hence, historical demographic studies of late medieval and early Renaissance Tuscany (including some of my own) tend to be structural comparisons of aggregate age at marriage and household structure among different social groups. Such studies, however, find few differences that might reflect the influence of inheritance. This article adopts a more strategic meth-

18 Klapisch-Zuber, *Women*, 46–47.

odology, analyzing the details of particular families and their household structure, wealth, and property devolution, in attempt to discover why previous studies found few of these aggregate relationships. It also mixes structural with strategic insights, in particular estimating demographic rates to provide the structural context for strategic action, and then employing qualitative evidence to show how families acted within this context.

Three types of evidence are used to assess household structure, marriage age, wealth, and the devolution of property: (1) The *Catasto* of 1427, a set of fiscal documents redacted for the purposes of taxation, provides extensive information about the majority of rural inhabitants at one point in time. (2) Notarial (legal) documents, matched to the *Catasto* declarations, illustrate a range of transactions at different points in time, even though they do not exist for all rural inhabitants. (3) Finally, estimates of marriage and orphanhood rates provide the context to suggest whether the qualitative examples were unusual or not.<sup>19</sup>

THE RURAL ECONOMY OF SMALLHOLDERS: A LOCAL MARKET This article considers Castelnuovo and Montecatini, two small rural communities located south of Volterra, in a region of Tuscany called the Val di Cecina, which by the fifteenth century, had been a part of the *contado* of Volterra, the portion of the countryside under its domination, for a long time. The Val di Cecina was some distance from Florence and was relatively unaffected by the penetration of this major urban market. Both Volterra and its *contado* came under Florentine control in 1427, after the Florentines suppressed a small armed uprising in Volterra resulting from the introduction of the *Catasto*.

The same general cultural features existed in Castelnuovo and Montecatini as in other regions of Tuscany, including the dowry system, relatively late marriage for men, early marriage for women, and partible, postmortem inheritance. Property rights were secure. Unlike other parts of late medieval Europe, rural in-

19 This method cannot fully substitute for exact counts of the different events represented in the notarial documents, but, given the nature of the documentary record, such information is unobtainable. A relatively large number of documents showing one type of legal transaction can be obtained for all of Tuscany (Emigh, "The Spread of Sharecropping in Tuscany: The Political Economy of Transaction Costs," *American Sociological Review*, LXII [1997], 423-442; Mazzi and Raveggi, *Gli uomini*), but these documents represent a variety of tenurial arrangements.

habitants in the Val di Cecina were not subject to feudal or customary fines and fees, limits on heritability, or prohibitions on marriage. *Catasto* declarations indicate that most individuals were smallholders who worked their own plots of land. A light plow or a hoe was used to till the most common crops of wheat, wine, and olives.<sup>20</sup>

As the following examples from the *Catasto* declarations and notarial documents illustrate, smallholders frequently bought, sold, and leased small plots of land. Land ownership and leasing were often related to the life cycle of the households. Newly married couples, as well as the elderly, usually owned little land. Young couples sometimes leased land, often from the infirm, who could not work it themselves, or from non-residents, who found it inconvenient to do so. The most common form of leasing was *terratico*, a short duration, fixed-term lease, paid in kind. Castelnovo and Montecatini had an active market for land and houses; the majority of notarial documents found for Castelnovo record sales of them. Land transactions frequently involved neighbors and relatives. Smallholders in the Val di Cecina were not particularly concerned with transmitting a patrimony intact to their offspring. The economy was based on the circulation of small plots of land among neighbors and family members, through leasing and purchase, not on the preservation of a patrimony. Inheritance was clearly important to offspring, but it was not the only way to obtain access to income-yielding property. Partible inheritance contributed to the maintenance of this economy based on the circulation of property by dividing property among offspring and by creating relatively small plots of land that could be purchased with small amounts of money.<sup>21</sup>

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS** Data from the *Catasto* of 1427 are used to estimate demographic rates that can serve as the context within which property devolution occurred. Because taxation

20 Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Archivio del Catasto (hereinafter *AC*) 241, ff. 1r–105r, 1035r–1224r; *AC* 272, ff. 17r–56v, 467r–554v.

21 Emigh, “Forms of Property Rights or Class Capacities: The Example of Tuscan Sharecropping,” *Archives Europeenes de Sociologie*, XL (2000), 22–52; Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Notarile antecosimiano (hereinafter *NA*), 11269. *Terratico* was supposedly fixed-term (Umberto Bosco [ed.], *Lessico universale italiano* [Rome, 1969], XXI, 697), although I found one variable term lease (in eighths) from the Val di Cecina (Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Diplomatico*, Stroziane Galletti, December 6, 1421).

was partially based on the number of household members, the *Catasto* contains a relatively complete census of the Tuscan population. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber transferred much of this demographic information to a machine-readable data set. Rural Tuscany was divided roughly into two sections, the *contado*—the region that had been under Florentine jurisdiction for the longest period of time and was most closely tied to its jurisdiction—and the district, which came under Florentine control after the *contado* did. The Val di Cecina was located in the district. The following demographic analyses use data from the *Catasto* for the entire Florentine district, excluding the major cities of Pisa, Pistoia, Arezzo, Volterra, Cortona, Montepulciano, Colle, and San Gimignano (following Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber’s classification of rural regions). The data from the rural regions of the district provide enough cases to make demographic estimation possible, and represent a region that had approximately the same social conditions as the Val di Cecina.<sup>22</sup>

Table 1 presents the percentage of women and men that were married in the rural region of the Florentine district, by five-year age groups. These data exhibit a pattern that is typical for all of Tuscany: Age at marriage was relatively early for women and late for men. Table 1 shows that about 43 percent of women were married between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, whereas only about 3 percent of men were married between those ages. The percentage of women who were married remained high throughout their thirties and forties and then gradually declined. The percentage of men who were married rose more slowly, reaching 90 percent for men between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five.

Figure 1 presents the probability of mother’s and father’s death, for given ages of offspring. These probabilities were constructed according to LeBras’ method, which requires several demographic components. Fertility was estimated by using the own-children method with data from the *Catasto* for the rural regions of the district; mortality by using a Coale-Demeny South model life table; and the distribution of father’s age, given mother’s age, by using the data from the *Catasto* for the rural district. Figure 1 shows that orphanhood was relatively common. When offspring were fifteen years old, the probability of the mother having died

22 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property Survey of Florentine Domains in the Province of Tuscany, 1427–1480: Machine Readable Data File* (Madison, 1981); *idem*, *Tuscans*, 58.

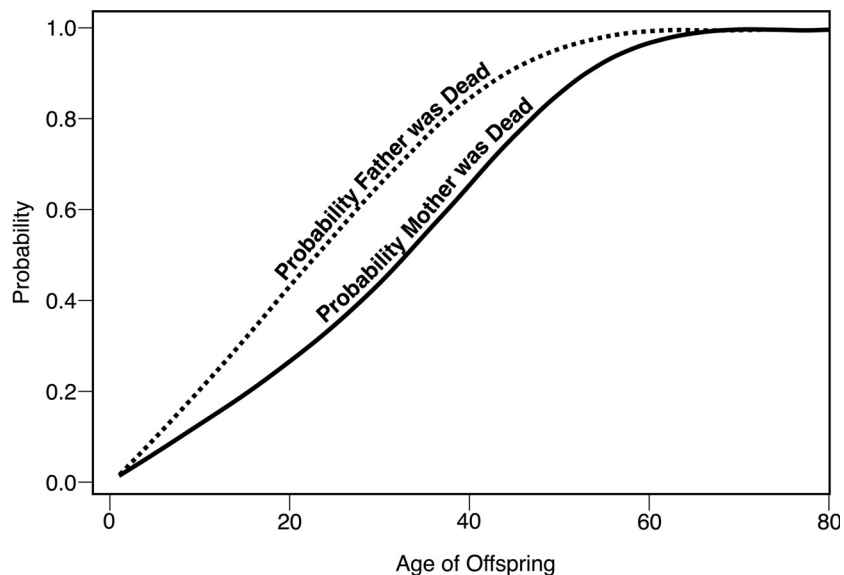
Table 1 Percentages of Married Men and Women in the Rural District of Florence

AGE GROUP	MEN MARRIED (%)	WOMEN MARRIED (%)
0-4	00.00	00.00
5-9	00.00	00.03
10-14	00.03	01.87
15-19	03.42	42.81
20-24	28.74	92.49
25-29	59.70	95.25
30-34	77.03	95.39
35-39	85.13	94.17
40-44	89.12	89.54
45-49	91.29	84.67
50-54	90.59	76.11
55-59	88.47	72.66
60-64	89.95	53.21
65-69	89.33	51.52
70-74	83.25	25.56
75-79	81.17	25.28
80-84	66.99	10.44

was nearly 20 percent and the probability of the father having died was over 30 percent. The probabilities of orphanhood rose gradually until age seventy of offspring, when nearly all parents were dead. At all ages, the probability of the father having died was higher than the probability of the mother having died, reflecting the relatively large age difference between husbands and wives. These orphanhood rates reflect the relatively high mortality in Tuscany at that time, exacerbated by a severe plague in 1400, as well as outbreaks in 1417, 1424, 1430, and 1437-1438.<sup>23</sup>

23 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 270-271; Kirshner and Molho, "Dowry Fund," 421; Hervé LeBras and Kenneth W. Wachter, "Living Forbears in Stable Populations," in Wachter, Eugene A. Hammel, and Laslett (eds.), *Statistical Studies of Historical Social Structure* (New York, 1978), 163-188. To estimate mortality, I differenced a smoothed population distribution from the *Catasto* of 1427, using data from Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*, from the rural regions of the Florentine district and their classification of rural and urban regions in Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 58. The resulting estimate of the number of deaths was entered into an empirical life table to estimate life expectancy. Then, I used a Coale-Demeny South model life table calculated using the life expectancy at birth from the empirical life table, to obtain age-specific probabilities of death (Ansley J. Coale and Paul Demeny, *Regional Model Life Tables and Stable Populations* [San Diego, 1983]). For fertility, I used the own-children method of fertility estimation (Lee-Jay Cho, Robert D. Retherford, and Minja Kim Choe, *The Own-Children Method of Fertility Estimation* [Honolulu, 1986]). The

Fig. 1 Probability That Parents Have Died, for Given Age of Offspring



Given the average male age at marriage and the orphanhood rates, fathers, on average, died around the time of their son's marriage. Table 1 shows that nearly 60 percent of men between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine were married. Figure 1 shows that more than half of fathers were dead when their offspring were aged twenty-five. By the time that their offspring reached age thirty, more than 60 percent of fathers had died. Thus, the overlap between men's marriages and their fathers' lifespan was relatively short, and males, on average, inherited their fathers' property near the time of their marriages. Because mortality was high and orphanhood common, protracted waits by offspring for parents to relinquish their inheritance or go into retirement, such as those

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own-children method also requires information on mortality, which I estimated using the procedure outlined above. The programs that estimated fertility and mortality provided five-year rates, which I separated into one-year rates using osculatory interpolation with Greville multipliers (Nathan Keyfitz, *Introduction to the Mathematics of Population* [Reading, 1968], 230–234). The calculation of orphanhood rates also requires a table of mothers' by children's age, which I obtained from the *Catasto*. I used the S-PLUS function, "loess," whenever smoothing was required (Statistical Sciences, Inc., "Loess," *S-PLUS for Windows Reference Manual, Version 3.1* [Seattle, 1993]).

described by Berkner, must have been rare. Furthermore, high mortality was combined with several other demographic factors to diminish the impact of patrilineal inheritance. Martin showed that high mortality and a large age difference between fathers and sons created pressures favoring matrilineal and lateral property devolution. In the Tuscan context, the relatively late age at first marriage of men and the tendency of widowers to marry successively younger women created a similar age gap between fathers and sons. In combination with high mortality, such an age gap could have decreased the importance of father-to-son inheritance, despite patrilineal norms.<sup>24</sup>

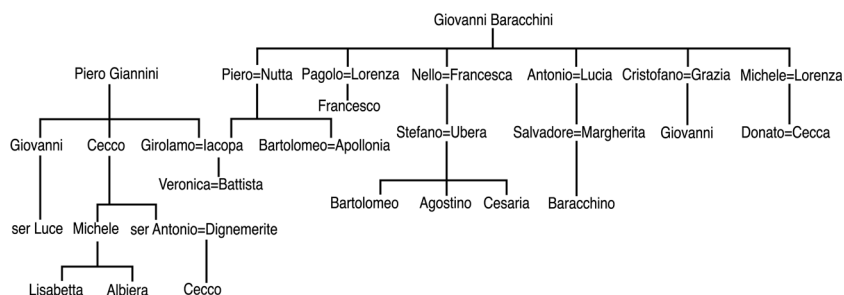
DEVOLUTION OF PROPERTY: INHERITANCE Nello di Giovanni Baracchini (see Figure 2), an inhabitant of Castelnuovo, faced, in one sense, an ideal situation when he made a will in 1425 at about age sixty-six. His *Catasto* return of 1427 indicated that he lived with his wife, his son, his daughter-in-law, and his grandchildren, constituting a stem family. Nello's wife was fifty years old and his son Stefano thirty years old. At the time of the redaction of the *Catasto* in 1429, Stefano was married to a twenty-five-year old woman. Three children were given as offspring of Stefano: two sons—Bartolomeo, aged eleven, and Agostino, aged three—and a daughter, Cesaria—aged one. Given the age difference between the boys, Nello's daughter-in-law would have been only fourteen when she had Bartolomeo. She may have been Stefano's second wife and not the mother of Bartolomeo.<sup>25</sup>

24 Berkner, "Stem Family"; *idem*, "Inheritance"; Martin, "Relationship of Inheritance." Table 1 and Figure 1 cannot explain whether the death, or anticipated death, of the fathers facilitated the marriage of the offspring, which had been delayed up to that point. Longitudinal data would be necessary to determine whether the relationship was causal.

25 AC 272, ff. 508r–509v. The will is found in NA 11269, no pagination (hereafter n.p.), March 27, 1425. For notarial documents that were not paginated, I provide the redaction date. Because the Florentine year began on March 25, the dates between January 1 and March 24 in the manuscripts are one year behind the modern date. In this article, dates are given in both in the Florentine and the modern style when the dates differ. For example, January 3, 1427/8 refers to the date that would be given in the manuscripts as 1427; the modern style would be 1428.

Nello's 1427 *Catasto* declaration stated that he was seventy years old, but the declarations for Volterra and its *contado* were actually redacted c. 1429. I follow standard usage and refer to "the *Catasto* of 1427." When specific age calculations are made in this article, they are calculated from 1429. Otherwise, the age declared on the document is given. All ages in this article refer to the age declared in the *Catasto*, which was not necessarily the same as biological age. The *Catasto* exhibits substantial age rounding, especially at multiples of five (Herlihy and

Fig. 2 Genealogy of the Baracchini and Giannini families



Nello was a wealthy man in his town (though still extremely poor in contrast to wealthy Florentines); only five of the households in Castelnuovo were assessed a higher taxable fortune. Nello's *Catasto* declaration listed twenty separate land holdings, plus an unspecified number of pieces of property with a declared value of fifteen *lire*. The total value of his land was 570 *lire* and the value of his animals was declared to be 85 *lire*. He had no outstanding debts. He stated that he worked his own land (*fallo a sua mano*), with one exception, a piece of land in the town of Pomarance (Rimpomerance) that he leased to a local resident of Pomarance. Its location might have made it inconvenient for Nello and his family to work it themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 170–183). Tuscans also altered their ages for a number of social and fiscal reasons (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 168–170, 257–260; Molho, “Deception”). *Catasto* declarations represent a fiscal household. The usual assumption is that all of the individuals listed in the same declaration lived together, though this was not always true.

<sup>26</sup> AC 272, ff. 508r–509v. There were two Florentine currencies, one in gold and one in silver, and the exchange rate between them fluctuated (Raymond De Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank: 1397–1494* [Cambridge, Mass., 1963], 31–34). In the *Catasto* of 1427, the exchange rate was four *lire* to one gold florin. Gold florins were divided into twenty gold *soldi*, and *lire* were divided into twenty *soldi di piccioli*. When necessary, the values of currencies are converted, based on this exchange rate. The exchange rate in any particular transaction may have been slightly different, but the documents used herein do not generally provide this information. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*.

This example, and all others that discuss the relative wealth of inhabitants of Castelnuovo and Montecatini in terms of total assets, employs the distribution of the variable, total assets, from the data in Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*. The estimated “value” of movable and immovable property is the value of the property declared by the owner, not the capitalized income determined by the *Catasto* officials for the purpose of calculating the tax. “Income” refers to the value of the crops obtained from the property as declared by the owner. “Taxable” wealth or assets means the values of the assets used by the tax

In his testament, Nello promised to restore his wife's dowry, a piece of land in Pomarance and 50 florins. He also left several pieces of land to local churches and a small amount to the poor. Nello declared his son, Stefano, as his heir and bequeathed his grandson, Bartolomeo, a house and four pieces of land, declared to be worth 198 *lire* in the *Catasto*. The rest of the declared property and animals, valued at 439 *lire* in the *Catasto*, was bequeathed to Stefano. If Stefano restored his mother's dowry, he would have been left with 239 *lire*, slightly more than his oldest son's share. Stefano undoubtedly managed his son's property and his mother's dowry, and benefited from the income. Nello left a small monetary legacy to each of his five brothers.

Nello's intentions are difficult to interpret. The large age gap of eight years between his two grandsons, Bartolomeo and Agostino, and the fact that his daughter-in-law would have been only fourteen when Bartolomeo was born, suggest that Bartolomeo may have been Stefano's son by a former wife. Did Nello make a will at the time of Stefano's remarriage in an attempt to direct a large proportion of the patrimony toward Bartolomeo, and, therefore, leave a smaller share to any males born after him? The shares of property promised to Stefano and Bartolomeo were nearly equal. If Stefano had more sons after Bartolomeo and Agostino, Bartolomeo might indeed have received a larger portion than these other heirs, especially if Stefano divided his share equally among his sons. Hence, Nello's will could be interpreted as an example of a testator limiting the division of property by deeding property directly to the third generation. Such a strategy would have moved away from the equal division of property among heirs toward a system of preferential partibility (which had elements in common with impartible systems). Or, was Nello unaware that Stefano would remarry? The other two grandchildren—the boy and girl—listed in the *Catasto* of 1427 may not have been born when the will was redacted. Nello mentioned

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officials minus any deductions that the tax officials allowed before calculating the tax. I calculated value and income directly from the *Catasto* declarations and used the data for taxable wealth in Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*. The poverty line, as defined by the *Catasto* officials, provides some measure of relative wealth. Households with total assets below 14 florins were not taxed, because they were assumed not to have sufficient assets for survival (Elio Conti, *I catasti agrari della Repubblica fiorentina e il catasto particellare toscano (Secoli XIV–XIX)* [Rome, 1966], 45).

only one son in the will. Did he have other surviving sons, or daughters who had been dowered?<sup>27</sup>

The possibility of stem family formation may have facilitated Stefano's marriage. Assuming that he was married before the birth of his first child, he would have been married when he was nineteen, a relatively early age at marriage for men in the Val di Cecina. Only about 3 percent of men between the ages of fifteen and nineteen were married (see Table 1). The orphanhood rates in Figure 1 show that about 44 percent of mothers and about 66 percent of fathers were dead when their offspring were aged thirty. Nello's son was in a relatively typical position if his father was near death when he was thirty. Clearly, however, he did not have to wait for the death of his father to marry.

Using some demographic approximations, Wrigley calculated the probability of different numbers of surviving heirs for pre-industrial families. According to his results, which are reasonably representative of fifteenth-century Tuscany, about 20 percent of families would have had no surviving heirs, about 20 percent would have had a female heir but no male heir, and about 60 percent would have at least one male heir. Thus, Nello's situation at the time of the redaction of his will was typical.<sup>28</sup>

Nello's family illustrates several points, even if it simultaneously raises questions of interpretation. Nello divided his patrimony by promising shares to his son and grandson, as well as small portions to each brother. Within the context of partible inheritance that might have affected his patrimony in his grandson's generation, however, he seems to have used practices more germane to impartible or preferentially partible inheritance, possibly because of his relatively favorable economic situation. His son's marriage was probably facilitated by his position as heir apparent. The example illustrates the many options available under a flexible system of partible inheritance, including household extension,

27 Lapo Niccolini also gave his oldest apparent male heir a larger share of the patrimony than the others (Ginevra Niccolini di Camugliano, "A Medieval Florentine: His Family and His Possessions," *American Historical Review*, XXXI [1925], 1–19). As Benadusi, "Rethinking the State," and Brown, *In the Shadow*, noted, the shift toward impartible inheritance that took place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may have had some precedent in the fifteenth century. For examples from other locations, see Segalen, *Fifteen Generations*, 76; Harvey Smith, "Family and Class: The Household Economy of Languedoc Winegrowers, 1830–1870," *Journal of Family History*, IX (1984), 64–87.

28 E. Anthony Wrigley, "Fertility Strategies for the Individual and the Group," in Tilly (ed.), *Historical Studies*, 135–154.

land leasing, and the use of a testament to direct property to particular heirs.

Nello's brother, Piero, had a daughter, Iacopa, married to Girolamo di Piero Giannini (see Figure 2). This marriage linked two prominent families in Castelnuovo, perhaps in the manner of the marriage alliances described by Molho and Benadusi. Iacopa was listed in the *Catasto* as a fifty-five-year-old widow living alone. Her assessed taxable wealth was about the median for Castelnuovo; much of it was land leased in share-term rent. According to two documents written in 1430, Veronica, Iacopa's daughter, restored Iacopa's dowry, which included household goods and several large pieces of land, worth a total assessed value of 265 *lire* according to the restitution and 246 *lire* according to the *Catasto*.<sup>29</sup>

Girolamo, the husband of Iacopa, faced the opposite problem of Piero's father, who had at least six sons. Girolamo apparently had no surviving male heirs. He designated his daughter, Veronica, and his grandnephew, Cecco, to be heirs in 1427. Again, according to Wrigley, Girolamo was not in a particularly unusual situation. Although it is impossible to determine the exact amount of property to which Veronica and Cecco were legally entitled, or that they actually received, this testament may have promised a larger share of the patrimony to Veronica than she would have received if Girolamo had died intestate. If, for example, Veronica had already received her dowry at marriage, and she received another half of her father's remaining estate at his death (the other half going to Cecco or, perhaps, to the monastery where he lived), the amount would probably be more than the one-quarter that she might have received if Girolamo died intestate. Interestingly, however, Girolamo did not designate Veronica as his sole heir. He divided what he could have given intact to Veronica between her and Cecco.<sup>30</sup>

29 AC 272, ff. 534r-v; NA 11270, ff. 46r-47r; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*. In most cases, such a restoration would not have included the actual transfer of property, since the family members lived in the same household. Since Iacopa and Veronica did not live together, the property may have actually changed hands, although it is more likely that Iacopa always physically held the property, and the documents recorded the legal transfer.

30 NA 11270, ff. 32v-33r. Local inheritance laws in the Val di Cecina may have been different from those in Florence. If so, Veronica may have been legally entitled to a different share. I know of no published source giving these laws for the Val di Cecina; extensive and detailed archival work on the laws and statutes of this, and other, rural regions is still needed.

This family was also involved in a complicated set of transactions to restore a dowry, for which a pair of orphans was responsible. Piero, the father of Girolamo, had at least three sons—Giovanni, Cecco, and Girolamo (see Figure 2). Giovanni had at least one son, a notary living in Siena. Cecco had at least two sons, Michele and Antonio. Michele had at least two daughters, Lisabetta and Albiera, who are listed as orphans of twelve and ten, respectively, in the *Catasto* of 1427. Their *Catasto* declaration lists them as an independent household, though it is unlikely that they lived by themselves. Orphanhood was a relatively common phenomenon. Figure 1 shows that about 20 percent of fathers and about 13 percent of mothers had died by the time that their offspring were ten years old. Antonio and his wife, Dignemerite, had at least one son, Cecco, named in the will of Girolamo. Cecco appears to be the only male heir (excluding the family of Giovanni di Piero, who apparently no longer lived in Castelnuovo). He entered a monastery sometime before 1425. Lisabetta and Albiera were responsible for the restoration of the dowry of Dignemerite but were unable (or unwilling) to pay; other arrangements had to be made for its payment. The assessed value of their taxable assets placed the orphans Lisabetta and Albiera in the wealthiest quarter of the town's population. Their *Catasto* return lists a few small pieces of unworked property, but the bulk of their assets were credits, perhaps left over from loans that their father made or outstanding debts from a shop. The loans may have been investments for them. Girolamo di Piero Giannini, their legal guardian (*tutor*), who died in 1428 or 1429, sold a piece of land for them in 1426, and he probably managed the accounts as well. Lisabetta and Albiera were probably the only surviving heirs of their father. If so, they provide another example of a family with no surviving male heirs.<sup>31</sup>

High mortality limited the number of heirs in other families. The situation of another set of orphans in Castelnuovo, Tomme

31 The affairs of the family can be partially discerned in three notarial documents: *NA* 11155, ff. 20r–v; *NA* 11269, n.p., August 1, 1427; *NA* 11273, n.p., April 4, 1425; as well as in the *Catasto* declaration, *AC* 272, ff. 554r–v. These documents do not consistently name the predecessors of Lisabetta and Albiera. In the *Catasto* of 1427, they are listed as “figliuole che ffurono di Checco di Piero Giannini.” In a notarial document of 1425 (*NA* 11155, f. 20r), they are listed as “filiarum Michaelis Pieri Ianini.” In another document of 1425 (*NA* 11273, n.p., April 4, 1425), they are listed as daughters of “Michaelis Checchi Pieri Giannini.” See also Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*.

and Andrea di Antonio di Nello di Lippo—aged nine and seven, respectively—was not uncommon (see Figure 1). By age nine, nearly 12 percent of offspring were maternal orphans and 18 percent of offspring were paternal orphans. Tomme and Andrea lived close to their uncle, Bartolomeo di Nello di Lippo (perhaps even in the same house), and, presumably, they were their father's heirs. Most of their own property was leased to others. Although they were not wealthy, they were not destitute either. About one-third of the inhabitants of Castelnuovo had a smaller taxable income than they did. Most likely, their uncle managed their property for them until they were older.<sup>32</sup>

Antonio di Pagolo di Giovanni was another resident of Castelnuovo who apparently had only female heirs. Antonio was seventy-one and lived with his wife who was fifty-five. He owned ten pieces of land, most of it leased in shares or *terratico*, probably because he was elderly. His estimated taxable wealth placed him in the wealthiest quarter of the households in Castelnuovo. In 1436, he would have been nearly eighty years old, and he made his will when he was sickly (*corpore languens*). He promised donations to a number of local churches and 10 *lire* to each of two brothers of unknown relation to him. He promised to restore the dowry of his wife, which included some cloth, household utensils, and 100 *lire*. He designated his daughters, Apollonia and Mea, to be heirs and promised them equal portions. Whether Antonio had other surviving male relatives is unknown. If so, however, and he died intestate, much of his property might have gone to them. Thus, Antonio's will may have promised his daughters a larger share of the estate than they would have received if he had died intestate. Since these daughters were not listed in the *Catasto*—perhaps they were already married and living with their husbands—their ages are unknown. If they were not married, their inheritances were probably used for dowries. The estimated value of Antonio's property was 196 *lire* (with the exception of two houses, for which no value was given). The total estimated value of his livestock was 57 *lire*. He stated that he had 30 florins (120 *lire*) in cash, and listed credits from four people totaling 115.5 *lire*. His total estimated assets were 488.5 *lire*, or about 244 *lire* per daughter—a substantial amount either for a dowry or an additional inheritance, even con-

32 AC 272, ff. 547v–549v; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*.

sidering that the daughters were probably responsible for their mother and for the restoration of her dowry. Antonio, however, did not attempt to preserve his patrimony intact; it was divided between his two daughters.<sup>33</sup>

Antonio di Chele di Neri was another smallholder living in Castelnuovo. His *Catasto* declaration lists twelve holdings and declares his age as fifty and his wife's as sixty. He also leased land in *terratico* from a neighbor. In 1425, arbitrators determined what to do with a legacy left to him and his wife by his wife's son, Giovanni di Iacopo, who had promised the legacy to them in a previously redacted testament. The amount was determined by arbitrators—two credits in the sum of 20 florins that had been owed to Giovanni, which could have represented a sizable proportion of their taxable wealth. According to their *Catasto* declaration, their total taxable wealth was 77 florins and 16 *soldi*, which was more than the average taxable wealth of smallholders in Castelnuovo, 74.7 florins. Also involved in this dispute were two other smallholders living in Castelnuovo, who were also relatives of Giovanni and may have had a claim to the assets of Antonio. The arbitration over this legacy provides an example of parents who outlived their offspring. Although the legacy may have proved to be useful economically, the timing of its transfer was not predictable; nor could it have facilitated their marriage in the way suggested in some of the historical demographic literature.<sup>34</sup>

Like high mortality, local markets diminished the effects of partible inheritance. Land purchases could be used to recombine land divided by partible inheritance. For example, Pietro di Nanni Guidini, who was originally from Castelnuovo but apparently changed his residence or died (I was unable to locate a *Catasto* declaration for him), sold half of a piece of land, which he held in common (*pro indiviso*) with his sister to a smallholder in Castelnuovo, for 20 *lire*. The smallholder then sold the property to

33 Herlihy and Klapisch, *Census and Property*; Wrigley, "Fertility Strategies"; AC 272, ff. 529r–530r; NA 3865, ff. 22v–23r. The will does not list the name of either Apollonia's or Mea's husband. An omission of husbands' names would have been unusual for married women. One possible explanation for husbands' names not being listed is that Apollonia and Mea lived with their parents but were excluded from the *Catasto* declaration. The absence of their names from the declaration would not have mattered for the purpose of taxation, since residents of the Florentine district were not given a deduction for dependents.

34 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 241, ff. 1039r–1040r; AC 272, ff. 470r–471r, f. 553r; NA 11269, n.p., April 2, 1425; NA 11269, n.p., May 31, 1425.

Pietro's sister for 16 *lire*. Although the document does not explicitly say so, this transaction apparently consolidated the ownership rights to the property, originally held jointly by the siblings, in Pietro's sister's name. The property may have been part of their inheritance. The language of the notarial document makes clear that their father was deceased at the time of the transaction. If so, it consolidated the patrimony in the hands of the female, not the male heir.<sup>35</sup>

A similar transaction, consolidating the rights to property, occurred in Montecatini. Nella and her son sold their half of a house and some pieces of land, which they held in common with Margherita, Nella's daughter, to Margherita's husband, Biagio di Chele, and Biagio's brother, Neri di Chele. This transaction apparently consolidated the rights to this property within the joint household of Biagio and Neri, even if it did not consolidate the property rights in the name of a single person. Nella probably had little interest in retaining rights to property in Montecatini. She resided with her husband, who was from the commune of Orciatice, in the former *contado* of Pisa.<sup>36</sup>

The preceding examples, in the context of the demographic rates, show why inheritance was not always a central social event in the Val di Cecina. Although individuals undoubtedly appreciated an inheritance when it occurred, it was unlikely to have had the strong effect on economic survival, age at marriage, or household structure that it had in other European localities. In the Val di Cecina, high mortality—which decreased the number of heirs and increased orphanhood rates—rendered inheritance unpredictable, and access to land through local markets and leases decreased its importance. Moreover, partible-inheritance practices in this region were flexible, and individuals could use testaments to direct the patrimony. Finally, the use of arbitration to settle disputes suggests that the division of property was not always straightforward, without conflict, or predictable.

35 AC 272, ff. 512v–513r; NA 11269, n.p., August 21, 1427; NA 11269, n.p., September 11, 1427; NA 11269, n.p., September 24, 1427; NA 11269, n.p., October 26, 1427; NA 11269, n.p., October 29, 1427; NA 11269, n.p., January 3, 1427/8. Pietro's sister, Cristena, is called Cristofana in the *Catasto* (AC 272, f. 549v). It is not clear why the smallholder was an intermediary in this transaction and why he seems to have incurred a net loss of 4 *lire*. Perhaps he owed money to Pietro di Nanni, which was canceled during the transaction.

36 Herlihy and Klapisich-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 272, ff. 22r–23v; NA 10054, ff. 74–75v, ff. 77r–v.

But what is most interesting about the preceding examples is that none deals with the types of inheritance practices that previous research suggests should have been most common—the equal division of property among sons. This literature also suggests that this practice might be revised to limit the division of the property, perhaps attempting to preserve the patrimony intact with a testament that promised a large share to a single son (which also happened in practice throughout the early modern period in Tuscany). It is impossible to determine the exact proportion of different types of property devolution from the few notarial documents that survive. The scarcity of notarial documents recording the transfer of property between fathers and sons might reflect the taken-for-granted nature of this form of property devolution, which, as a result, did not require documentation. Cohn, however, found numerous examples of testaments naming male heirs among wealthy Florentines. Thus, residents of the Val di Cecina may have named daughters as heirs more often than Florentines. This possibility is intriguing, because the families presented herein, though not wealthy compared with the Florentine patriciate, were among the more prosperous in Castelnuovo and Montecatini. Unlike other Tuscan elites, however, their inheritance practices may have followed fewer patrilineal strictures.<sup>37</sup>

The types of property devolution found in the Val di Cecina—from parents to orphans, offspring to parents, fathers to daughters, and fathers to grandchildren—are not discussed much in the historical literature. When they are, as in the work of Bourdieu or Goody, they are often treated as exceptional cases, in which individuals somehow had to cope with the inconveniences associated with them and the bad luck that produced them, with the ultimate aim of approximating the outlines of father-to-son property devolution. The demographic rates presented in this study, however, suggest that a broad range of types of property devolution must have been common, not exceptional, where mortality was high.<sup>38</sup>

DEVOLUTION OF PROPERTY: DOWRY Dowry was the other major form of property devolution between generations. It was closely linked to inheritance practices as well as local markets. Women

<sup>37</sup> Cohn, *Cult*; *idem*, *Women*.

<sup>38</sup> Bourdieu, “Marriage Strategies”; Goody, “Strategies.”

had an enforceable right to a “suitable” dowry, the value of which was to be proportional to the size of the estate. Dowered Tuscan women could be excluded from inheritance. Although much of the historical demographic literature focuses on the impact of inheritance on marriage, in Tuscany, the dowry may have had an equally important role in allowing offspring to establish a separate household, because its timing often coincided more closely with marriage than inheritance.<sup>39</sup>

Antonio di Michele di Fede, twenty-three years old, was a shoemaker in Castelnuovo. He lived with his mother, Bartolomea, forty-eight, his wife, Barbara, twenty, and his infant daughter Rosa (see Figure 3). The estimated value of his property, animals, and credits was 566 *lire*. The assessed value of his taxable assets placed him in the wealthiest third of the town’s population. Seven of his nine pieces of land yielded crops, and his *Catasto* declaration states that he worked this land himself. He undoubtedly had income from his shoemaking shop as well.<sup>40</sup>

Antonio would have about nineteen years old when he married in 1425, a relatively young age in the region. Table 1 shows that only about 3 percent of men aged fifteen to nineteen were married. Stem family formation rather than the actual receipt of his inheritance at the death of his father was likely to have facilitated his marriage at such a relatively young age. The notarial documents suggest that his father was alive at the time of his marriage and that he died about eighteen months thereafter. Antonio’s mother is listed in the same *Catasto* declaration as Antonio. This stem family was probably formed when Antonio and Barbara were married, and Antonio’s father was still alive.<sup>41</sup>

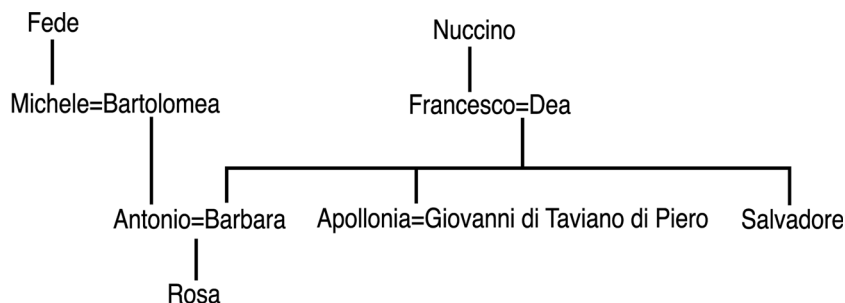
Apollonia, Barbara’s sister, was married on the same day to Giovanni di Taviano di Piero of Castelnuovo; the amount and composition of her dowry was to be decided by arbitrators. In November 1426, Barbara’s father, Francesco di Nuccino, borrowed 42 *lire* from an individual from Siena, whom he promised to repay within a year. The debt was not listed in his *Catasto*; he

39 Kuehn, *Law*, 238–239, 242.

40 Herlihy and Klapsich-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 272, ff. 483r–484v; NA 11269, n.p., June 10, 1425.

41 The documents dated June 10, 1425 (NA 11269, n.p.) and December 3, 1426 (NA 12847, n.p.) list Antonio as “Antonio Michaelis Fedis”; the document of December 9, 1426 (NA 3863, n.p.), lists Antonio as “Antonio quondam Michaelis Fedis.” Possibly, Michele was ill, and Antonio married in anticipation of his death.

Fig. 3 Genealogy of Antonio di Michele di Fede and Francesco di Nuccino.



apparently successfully repaid it. His *Catasto*, however, listed a debt to Giovanni di Tavanecchio from Castelnuovo for a dowry (*per resto di dota*) in the amount of 40 *lire*. In December, Francesco traded houses with a local resident of Castelnuovo and received 8 florins. Then he sold this exchanged house to a different local inhabitant for 52 florins. Antonio received Barbara's dowry of 100 *lire* on the same day. The house was apparently sold to provide money for the dowry. Francesco may have borrowed money for the dowry of Barbara or Apollonia. He borrowed either 82 *lire* or 42 *lire*, refinancing this amount after the first debt came due. Since Francesco listed a house in the *Catasto*, he apparently sold a second house; perhaps this strategy was preferable to selling land. Thus, although some of the specifics are obscure, Francesco clearly made several transactions, including trading and selling property, and borrowing money to provide for his daughters' dowries.<sup>42</sup>

Francesco was sixty and his wife, fifty. He had one son, Salvatore, aged five. The estimated yearly income from his land was 34 *lire* and four *soldi*. His declared taxable assets place him in about the middle of town in terms of wealth. The 42 *lire* that Francesco borrowed was a large sum for a sixty-year-old man; if he borrowed 82 *lire* instead, the amount was enormous. Compared to the value of all his property, however, it was small. The value of his land alone (excluding his house) was 232 *lire*. If he had only these three surviving children, presumably Francesco's entire patrimony of 232 *lire* would have been left to Salvatore. In

42 AC 272, ff. 475v–476r, ff. 469r–v; NA 3863, n.p., November 2, 1426; NA 3863, n.p., December 19, 1426; NA 11269, n.p., June 10, 1425. The amount listed in the notarial document is 42 *lire*. Francesco probably received less than that amount, thereby incorporating interest into the loan.

that case, Barbara's dowry of 100 *lire* would have been less than half of Salvadore's share. There may have been other heirs, though I can find none in Castelnuovo's *Catasto* of 1427. It is not possible to determine the size or terms of payment of Apollonia's dowry since I could not find the dowry declaration. This dowry might have reduced Salvadore's inheritance even more. Assuming a single male heir, Barbara would have received substantially less than her brother if she received only the dowry. If Barbara was also given a postmortem inheritance, in addition to the dowry, then she may have received a share equal to Salvadore's. Furthermore, she received her dowry much earlier than he would have received his inheritance, which could have been delayed indefinitely. The relative advantage to male and female heirs depended not only on the size of the portions but also on when they were received. Francesco provided a dowry to Barbara that was nearly three times the annual income of Francesco's property. The large age difference between Salvadore and Barbara gave Francesco a long time to recover financially from the payment of Barbara's dowry.<sup>43</sup>

After Francesco contracted his debt, but before he received the money, Antonio purchased a house in Castelnuovo from two brothers and their cousins living in Volterra for 72 florins (288 *lire*). The house was apparently sold to him to restore a dowry. Antonio and his mother then sold two houses in Castelnuovo for a total price of 232 *lire*. They apparently sold one house to purchase another one. The house that they purchased had a higher value than the one that they sold and may have been larger to accommodate more family members. Almost a year later, Antonio bought a piece of land with chestnut trees in Castelnuovo for 14 *lire*. He declared its value to be 10 *lire* in the *Catasto*. He probably used Barbara's dowry to make these purchases. If the assets of 566 *lire* in his *Catasto* declaration include the 100 *lire* from Barbara's dowry, the dowry represents a sizable proportion of the household's assets, though still less than what Antonio presumably inherited from his father.<sup>44</sup>

A similar example of a husband buying land with his wife's dowry comes from Montecatini. Giovanni di Guido was seventy-nine years old, and his wife Tessa was sixty. Giovanni's son, Guido, lived in Montecatini, and worked some of his father's land.

43 Herlihy and Klapisich-Zuber, *Census and Property*.

44 NA 3863, n.p., December 6, 1426; NA 11269, n.p., October 29, 1427; NA 12847, n.p., December 3, 1426.

In October 1427, Tessa's parents left her some household goods, farm implements, pigs, wine, cloth, and chestnuts, valued at 80 *lire*, to be added to her dowry. This addition of goods, valued at 20 florins, may have represented a large addition to the household's property. According to their *Catasto* declaration, their total taxable wealth was valued at 75 florins and 14 *soldi*, which placed them in the wealthiest third of households in Montecatini. Seven months later, Giovanni purchased two pieces of land for 32 *lire* from a seller who lived in another town and, presumably, found it inconvenient to work the land himself.<sup>45</sup>

The receipt of women's property was economically useful to other families as well. In June 1428, Michele di Michele received the dowry of his wife, Maria, a piece of property in Montecatini from her father, who, like Michele, was a smallholder living in Montecatini. This plot of land—valued at 15 *lire* in the dowry declaration and 20 *lire* in the *Catasto*—is the only piece of immovable property listed in Michele's *Catasto* of 1427. Neither Michele nor his father-in-law was wealthy. The declared value of their taxable assets placed both of them in the poorest third of the town's residents. Michele's age was twenty-four years old and Maria's, sixteen. They would have been married when they were about twenty-three and fifteen, respectively. Table 1 shows that about 28 percent of men and 42 percent of women were married by those ages. Maria's dowry probably facilitated their marriage, providing them with virtually their only asset. Even if Michele had received some pre-mortem transfer from his father, who was apparently alive at the time of the marriage, it would have been small. This marriage does not seem to have been dependent upon the receipt of the inheritance, despite the family's poverty, even in local terms. Michele and Maria may have leased land from their neighbors. Because lessees' *Catasto* declarations do not ordinarily provide any information about such arrangements, it is impossible to determine whether Michele and Maria leased land. The other examples herein, however, indicate that local inhabitants frequently leased some of their property to their neighbors.<sup>46</sup>

45 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 272, ff. 21r–22r, f. 28r; NA 10054, ff. 71v–72v; NA 11273, n.p., May 9, 1428.

46 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 241, f. 29r; AC 272, f. 32r; NA 11273, n.p., June 12, 1428. Michele's father was apparently alive because this notarial document states, "*Chelis Chelis de Castro Florentino habitatoris in Castro Montis Catini.*"

Like inheritance, the receipt of the dowry was a process, not necessarily settled without dispute. Arbitrators frequently determined the size of a dowry in Castelnuovo. In November 1427, Juliana, the daughter of Nanni di Biagio Martini, married Gabriello di Guarnieri of Montecastelli. The document recording the marriage states the names of two men who were to determine the amount of the dowry. Nanni's *Catasto* declaration, which would have been redacted between 1429 and 1430, states that he owed 24 *lire* and 10 *soldi* to Gabriello di Guarnieri for a dowry. The *Catasto* declaration indicates that Nanni Martini was a smallholder living in Castelnuovo, who owned and worked several small pieces of property.<sup>47</sup>

In September 1426, arbitrators determined the amount of the dowry of Francesca, the wife of Michele di Domenico Righetti, to be 100 *lire* (25 florins), which was to be paid by her brothers, who, like her, were inhabitants of Castelnuovo. The brothers gave Michele 36 *lire* on the day of the decision and were required to give him the remainder, 64 *lire*, before the following August. Francesca's dowry must have represented a considerable amount of money. In the *Catasto*, Francesca's brothers declared assets valued at 71 florins and six gold *soldi*. They also had a substantial number of debts, which brought their taxable wealth down to 37 florins and 11 *soldi*, which placed them among the poorer half of the residents of Castelnuovo.<sup>48</sup>

Michele, aged forty-two, and Francesca, aged thirty-four, lived with Michele's parents. The *Catasto* lists three minor children, two daughters, aged twelve and one, and a son, aged seven, though it does not specify whether any or all of them were Francesca's biological children. They were presumably Michele's. Michele and Francesca's marriage might not have been their first. If it was their first marriage, the transfer of the dowry might have been delayed. Francesca would have been about thirty-one years old when her brothers promised her dowry to her husband. Figure 1 shows that hers was a typical case; about 70 percent of fathers had

47 AC 272, ff. 488v–489r; NA 11269, n.p., November 16, 1427. Similar instances of arbitration include the dowry of Francesca, daughter of Nardo di Ghieri (NA 11269, n.p., May 27, 1425), and the dowry of Maria, daughter of Giovanni di Michele Tinozzi (NA 11269, n.p., April 9, 1425).

48 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 272, ff. 514r–515v, ff. 539v–540r; NA 3863, n.p., September 30, 1426.

died by the time their offspring were thirty years old. Francesca's dowry of 25 florins must have represented a major addition to the wealth of her father-in-law's household. The declared taxable wealth of 106 florins in the *Catasto* placed them in the top third of households in Castelnuovo. Again, stem family formation, not inheritance (and possibly not the receipt of a dowry either), probably facilitated Michele's marriage.<sup>49</sup>

Galgano di Christofano, seventy-one, was also a smallholder in Castelnuovo. He lived with his fifty-five-year-old wife. Galgano's daughter, Bandecca, was listed in the Volterranean *Catasto* declaration of her husband, ser Iacopo di Giusto (the title "ser" before his name indicated that he was a notary). She was twenty-two and her husband, thirty. A son, aged two and one-half, was also listed in the declaration. Galgano's taxable assets placed his household in the wealthiest quarter of the residents of Castelnuovo. In September 1426, Iacopo received the dowry of Bandecca from Galgano, consisting of two pieces of land and 50 florins. However, there were several additional transactions concerning this dowry. In December 1428, Iacopo sold the two pieces of land to Galgano's son, Michele, for 50 florins. In September 1430, Iacopo received 400 *lire* from Galgano, also for Bandecca's dowry. Iacopo apparently held some land of Galgano's in pawn, pending the payment of the 400 *lire*. in 1426, when the first dowry transaction occurred, Bandecca would have been about nineteen years old and Iacopo would have been twenty-seven. Table 1 shows that about 42 percent of women between the ages of fifteen and nineteen were married and about 60 percent of men between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine were married. Figure 1 shows that about 27 percent of mothers and 43 percent of fathers had died when their offspring were aged twenty.<sup>50</sup>

Another example suggests even more clearly that dowries could be received considerably after the time of the marriage. In January 1434, Niccolao di Salvatore di Cerbone received 15 florins for the dowry of his wife, Francesca. Again, the dowry must have represented a sizable addition to the household's assets. The declared taxable value of Salvatore's assets of 101 florins and 12 *soldi* placed his household just short of the wealthiest third of

49 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 272, f. 515v.

50 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 271, ff. 909v–910r; AC 272, ff. 526r–527r; NA 3863, n.p., September 23, 1426; NA 11271, ff. 89r–91v, ff. 138v–139v.

households in Castelnuovo. In the *Catasto* declaration of his father, Niccolai's age is given as forty-four years and Francesca's as twenty-six. Two children of Niccolai are also listed in this *Catasto* declaration, a son, aged five, and a daughter, aged one. If Niccolai and Francesca were married before the birth of the oldest child, Niccolai would have received the fifteen florins for Francesca's dowry about ten years after their marriage. At the time of the receipt of the 15 florins, Francesca would have been about thirty-one years old. Her father gave her the dowry. A dowry given by a father to a woman of that age would not have been a rare event. Figure 1 shows that nearly 68 percent of fathers were dead when their offspring were aged thirty-one.<sup>51</sup>

As the examples presented herein illustrate, dowries consisted of land and houses, cash, and household goods. The terms of dowry transmission, often set by arbitrators, were highly variable—some given to the husband at the time of marriage and others over a prolonged period. In the Val di Cecina, property sales and loans were common means to provide cash for daughters' dowries. The receipt of a dowry or a legacy often prompted the recipient to purchase land.<sup>52</sup>

Property devolution through dowry was important to the household economy and marriage. As the examples indicate, the size of the dowry was rarely equal to that of the inheritance. Sons' and husbands' shares through inheritance were generally larger than daughters' and wives' through dowries and inheritance, except when the family had only surviving daughters who were named as heirs. Nevertheless, the dowry, not the inheritance, sometimes facilitated marriage, because of its timing. Even more important for marriage than either of these two forms of property devolution may have been the possibility of household extension, especially stem family formation. Although partible inheritance is often associated with joint families (which were also common in Tuscany), stem family formation, though often associated with impartible inheritance, seems to have been important in the Val di Cecina, despite Klapisch-Zuber's suggestion to the contrary. Stem households constituted nearly 17 percent of the households there, about the same percentage as joint families. Both forms of prop-

51 Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property*; AC 272, f. 500r; NA 10054, f. 109r.

52 Another example is the restitution of Mona Iacopa's dowry, which included numerous household goods and land (NA 11270, ff. 46r-47r).

erty devolution, especially inheritance, were unpredictable. High mortality frequently interrupted the direct transfer of inheritance and dowries from the parents to the children. The property received in these transactions was usually put to good use when received, but not necessarily to facilitate the marriage or establish a separate household.<sup>53</sup>

The high mortality rates in the Val di Cecina reduced the reliability of inheritance from father to son as a mechanism to assure access to income-producing property. They disrupted the direct transmission of property from parents to offspring, decreased the number of surviving heirs, and made the timing of inheritance uncertain. Furthermore, property devolution in this region was not motivated primarily by the preservation of a patrimony. Testaments show little evidence of attempts to prevent the division of inheritance, though, in principle, they could have been used to do so. The rural economy based on local markets and the circulation of property created other opportunities for income for offspring.

The different reasons for the circulation of property were mutually reinforcing. Because land was fragmented by partible inheritance and dowries, selling or leasing land was both useful and necessary. The active land market meant that inheritances and dowries were not the only mechanisms for obtaining real property. As in other places where partible inheritance was practiced (for example, as discussed by Levi and Sabeau), this rural economy depended not upon the preservations of large pieces of property but on the circulation of many small pieces of property. Economic survival and the preservation of large patrimonies were not necessarily connected. The importance traditionally placed on the transmission of property from parents to offspring, and, in particular, from father to son, is rooted in a particular theoretical view of preindustrial, rural society, which saw access to land through inheritance as the principle means of economic survival. Such a view may not hold, however, in the Val di Cecina.<sup>54</sup>

In other regions of Western Europe, age at marriage may have depended upon the reception of an inheritance but not necessarily in the Val di Cecina, in part because of the options derived from leasing, co-residence with the parental couple, and dowry.

53 Emigh, "Land Tenure," 625; Klapisch-Zuber, *Women*, 20.

54 Levi, *Inheriting*; Sabeau, *Property*.

Borrowing money, either with or without real property as collateral, was yet another alternative. As the examples show, it was possible to borrow money to provide a dowry. Inheritance was certainly economically useful to families, but may have been less important in establishing marriage per se than dowry because of its timing. The importance of inheritance was also reduced by high mortality, land and labor markets, and the recourse to household extension.

The evidence presented herein suggests that the patrilineal system was even weaker in rural regions of smallholders, even among local elites, than in the small cities documented by Cohn. High mortality and the relative poverty of the regions must have reduced the extent to which sons could inherit property from their fathers, and local markets for land and labor decreased the necessity of relying on such inheritance. As Martin notes, under conditions of high mortality, patrilineal systems exhibit matrilineal features.<sup>55</sup>

Taken together with Cohn's findings, this study suggests that even if patrilineal inheritance was, in fact, normative, the actual extent of its practice in Tuscany may have been limited. The rural regions under consideration herein, though economically and politically less powerful than Florence, comprised the majority of the population. Florence comprised only 14 percent of the Tuscan population in 1427. Although sharecropping was becoming more and more common throughout the fifteenth century, in 1427, more than half of the rural residents were smallholders. Because these rural regions are not documented as well as urban ones, the extent to which they followed the patrilineal system is unknown. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that caution should be exercised in attributing it to the region as a whole. Only the Florentine elite may have been able to implement it effectively.<sup>56</sup>

Intrinsic to the historical demographic literature on inheritance is a critique of the primary analytical categories, partibility and impartibility. Inheritance practices vary widely, even within relatively small geographical regions, and the distinction between different forms of inheritance is often blurry in practice. These difficulties have led scholars to develop strategic, transactional, or

<sup>55</sup> Cohn, *Cult*; Martin, "Relationship."

<sup>56</sup> Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans*, 115.

processual approaches, which abandon attempts to find aggregate correlations between inheritance, age at marriage, and household structure in favor of more detailed historical or ethnographic accounts of households' practices. Yet, structural and strategic approaches often share a common emphasis on the importance of inheritance, and, in particular, the transmission of the patrimony from father to son.<sup>57</sup>

This article, instead of arguing that the categories of partibility and impartibility need to be rethought or do not apply, suggests that the emphasis on inheritance might be the problem. The theoretical premise that fuels the distinction between partible and impartible inheritance, that access to land through inheritance was crucial for economic survival, seems less important in the Val di Cecina.

This study combines the structural and strategic methodologies. Detailed accounts of households' transactions and practices are set in the context of regional demographic rates, which provide the structural context for individuals' actions. Thus, the methodology attempts to overcome the drawbacks of either approach alone. Structural accounts often fail to note the variability between households, whereas strategic approaches cannot indicate the representativeness of individual examples. Furthermore, this combined methodology extracts a considerable amount of evidence from the limited documentary record about the preindustrial peasantry. Nonetheless, considerably more research is necessary to understand how the vast majority of the preindustrial population lived, if the effect of inheritance is to be investigated empirically and not assumed to be constant. The main argument of this article—that the centrality of inheritance to social life was variable and was affected particularly by wealth, mortality, and local markets—could be examined in other contexts.

57 Bourdieu, "Marriage Strategies"; Brettell, "Kinship."