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English Local History: Some Current Approaches Appraised

Charles Phythian-Adams

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the type of studies needed if the gaps in *Canada Before Confederation* are to be filled.

For those outside geography, both books provide good examples of the geographer's central concern with the man-land relationship. They show how different ethnic groups perceive the landscape and how they modify it according to their own cultural mould. Unlike their determinist colleagues of a generation or two ago, today's geographer sees man as an active force modifying his environment within the broad limits imposed by nature. Man-made landscapes, then, are reflections of his heritage which the geographer attempts to interpret. "Reading" the landscape is an important part of the geographer's *métier* and the developing this skill kelps to enable him to add his own particular insight into our knowledge of man.

ERIC ROSS

English Local History:
Some Current Approaches
Appraised

If the objects of English local historical studies are generally small in scale, the scope of the subject is vast. At the last count it embraces nothing less than the whole motley development of local society. At the same time, and despite a highly respectable genealogy of unremitting scholarship, it is still a comparatively young academic discipline. The first — and indeed only — chair in Local History in England, that at Leicester, was not created until 1963. Its first incumbent, the late Professor H. P. R. Finberg had been head of the department in question since 1951, having himself succeeded to the three-year-old mantle of the founder, W. G. Hoskins. Apart from the labours of these two remarkable scholars and a handful of more recent workers, a growing number of whom are attached to departments concerned with regional studies in other universities, the present academic study of English local history, owes much to the efforts of those who have specialized in related fields — in economic or social history, or in historical geography, or archaeology. While many of these latter scholars have written their history on a local scale, they would not necessarily describe themselves as essentially local historians. This highly selective review of the subject over the last decade or so should therefore do more than merely define the rough limits of the academic local historian's domain. It must also take notice of some of the influential writings of these other scholars, and indicate, however subjectively, their general relevance for the local historian.

The first problem, then, is one of demarcation: what is unique to local history? The acid test must surely be whether an historian is concerned *primarily* with the relation of his historical topic — like agricultural techniques, urban politics, religion or population — either to the national picture, or to the locality he has chosen as the unit of his investigation. In the case of the true local historian, it is evident that by definition the place must come first. That being so, he will be more likely to seek for inter-relationships among different topics within that context — to look at the locality in the round — than to investigate a specific strand of national history on a local scale. This is far from saying, however, that the local historian is not concerned about either the wider applicability of his findings or the need to test the conclusions of others. It is merely to emphasize that he usually works upwards and outwards from the microcosm to the macrocosm, and not *vice-versa*.

But if the locality is the basic frame of reference, can the objects of study within it be more closely defined? Any answer to this question is bound to be partial. Broadly speaking, however, the content of the subject may be described as the historical study of the people of England and of how they lived, or failed to live, both in relation to their various local environments, and in relation to one another within identifiable social groupings or "communities". Such communities are seen as societies and not merely as the administrative units implied by terms like "parish" or "manor." Indeed the field of study can be much wider than these limited entities. In such cases the crux of the matter should lie ideally in defining the line beyond which, given a central starting point, the more intimate inter-dependencies of adjacent communities can no longer be traced. Common to all dynamic local studies is the need both to capture the short-run individual character of the community or communities concerned, and with due allowance paid to the forces of interia[1], to define the nature of long term change during some or all of the time from settlement, through, where relevant, to total depopulation[2]. In the view of the present writer, local history thus adds a vital chronological dimension to the thin temporal skin of such disciplines as social anthropology and sociology[3]. In particular, local history can shed a flood of light on the nature of "pre-industrial" society — however recently that might be defined — and on industrializing society also. By concentrating on relatively small-scale communities, there is a tendency for academic local historians at present to avoid the study of the vast *cities* of the nineteenth century urban revolution. It is at this

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1   Alan Everitt, *Change in the Provinces: the Seventeenth Century*, Department of English Local History, Occasional Papers, second series, no. 1 (Leicester, 1969).

2   Maurice Beresford and John G. Hurst, *Deserved Medieval Villages: Studies* (London, 1971).

3   Two important books which are increasingly influencing English local historians were written by sociologists: G. C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (Harvard, 1941); W. M. Williams, *The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth* (London, 1956).

point that the interests of the local and urban historian overlap. The former feels happiest when he is still able to treat in sufficient human detail his community as a locally identifiable whole[4].

A major element in identifying the *genius loci* is understanding the nature of the historic landscape. It is thus appropriate to begin this survey of recent literature with the basic contextual preoccupation of the English local historian. For above all, it is the use of visual and physical evidence, when it is exploited in conjunction with the documentation, that most markedly differentiates his methodology from convential historical analysis in England. Without an understanding of local environment — its impact on man, and man's impact on it — the study of traditional communities would be impossible.

The physical approach has at least four facets. The first is especially to be associated with the work of Professor W. G. Hoskins, and particularly his general introduction[5] to a series of county studies of the English landscape which he initiated. Perhaps the most illuminating recent contributions here have been those on the landscapes of Dorset and Cambridgeshire[6], and on Shropshire[7]. In them, the successive impressions left by generations of men upon the landscape — whether field, or road, or habitation — are related in the last resort to the underlying geology of each area. Such studies, involving increasingly sophisticated fieldwork techniques, also synthesize the three other aspects of physical history, which are coming to represent the basic methodological tools of the trade.

The newest and perhaps most fundamental of these are the emergent disciplines of palaeo-botany and historical ecology. Recent scientific work on pollen analysis has helped to reconstruct vegetational cover of the Lake District and elsewhere in prehistoric times.[8] For historical periods Max Hooper has suggested that the controlled counting of shrubs may help to date existing hedgerows with a continuous history from, for example, Anglo-Saxon times[9]. Investigations of surviving medieval woodland and plant life have proven similarly rich in potential.[10]

4   V. "Editorial," *Urban History Yearbook* (1974), pp. 6-7.

5   *The Making of the English Landscape* (London, 1955).

6   Christopher Taylor, *The Cambridgeshire Landscape: Cambridgeshire and the Southern Fens* (London, 1974); *Dorset* (London, 1970).

7   Trevor Rowley; *The Shropshire Landscape* (London, 1972).

8   W. Pennington, *The History of British Vegetation* (London, 1969).

9   "Dating Hedges," *Area Institute of British Geographers,* IV (1970), pp. 63-5.

10   G. F. Peterken, "Development of Vegetation in Staverton Park, Suffolk", *Field Studies,* III (1969), pp. 1-39.

In these basic contexts of geology and vegetation may be placed the study of early settlement morphology — an area in which an earlier over-reliance on nineteenth century maps has recently been rudely shattered by the findings of archaeology as summarized by Hurst. Here obviously, where funds and opportunity exist, archaeology alone can be the ultimate arbiter. Nevertheless, historical geographers are also making significant contributions[11], while the careful mapping of historical data — of Angevin Canterbury by William Urry, and to quite outstanding peaks of cartographic perfection, in a volume of maps and town plans edited by M. D. Lobel[12] — is leading towards new standards of accurate interpretation.

Closely related to the analysis of settlement-shapes and road lines is the emergent study of historic buildings both below and above ground. Archaeologists like P. V. Addyman[13] and Hurst are helping to clarify ideas on Anglo-Saxon and medieval housing, while a formidable new discipline of vernacular architecture, which already has its text-books[14], is pre-occupied with rural and urban standing structures below the level of polite architecture, and is highly conscious of geographical variations in building materials.[15] Intensive studies of the late medieval and early modern towns of King's Lynn and Burford by Vanessa Parker and Michael Laithwaite respectively have shown the sort of contribution such studies can make when they are wedded both to documen-

11 B. K. Roberts, "Village Plans in County Durham: a Preliminary Statement", *Medieval Archaelogy*, XVI (1972), pp. 33-56; "Field Systems of the West Midlands", Baker and Butlin, *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 188-231; June Sheppard, "Metrological Analysis of Regular Village Plans in Yorkshire," *Agricultural History Review*, XXII (1974), pp. 118-135; M. R. G. Cozen, "The Use of Town Plans in the Study of Urban History", *The Study of Urban History* ed. H. J. Dyos (London, 1968), pp. 113-130.

12 *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, London, 1967; M. D. Lobel, ed., *Historic Towns: Maps and Plans of Towns and Cities in the British Isles, with Historical Commentaries, from Earliest Times to 1800*, Vol I (London and Oxford, 1969).

13 "The Anglo-Saxon House: A New Review", *Anglo-Saxon England*, I (Cambridge, 1972); J. G. Hurst, "A Review oF Archaeological Research (to 1968)", Hurst and Beresford, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-144.

14 M. W. Barkley, *The English Farmhouse and Cottage* (London, 1961); R. W. Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* (London, 1970).

15 A. Clifton-Taylor, *The Pattern of English Building* (London, 1962).

tation and to the map.[16] The subject further embraces attempts to classify both house-types[17] and farm lay-outs.[18]

An understanding of the physical evidence is particularly important when attention is turned to the nature of early settlement, a subject which has rightly loomed large in much recent work. An attempt has been made by an archaeologist, Barry Cunliffe, to plot the successive phases of settlement on the early medieval landscape in a small area of Hampshire[19]. The work of a new school of place-name experts, on the other hand, is showing the very close relationship between post-Roman settlement names, Roman roads, and the more easily cultivated sand and gravel caps that maps of drift geology reveal[20].

Intensive research is also beginning to demonstrate that the origins of many English rural communities were quite different from the classical picture of a free German peasantry settling in nucleated villages with imported common-field systems. On the one hand, following the lead of H. P. R. Finberg and Glanville Jones[21], there is now a far greater emphasis on continuity through from the Celtic society of Roman times to the Anglo-Saxon period, and in some striking recent work[22] even from before; on the other, there is a growing feeling that early Anglo-Saxon landscapes were peopled by scattered farmsteads and hamlets and not by nucleated villages,[23] the populations of which were as possibly bond as free and whose agriculture was not originally in

16   *The Making of King's Lynn: Secular Buildings from the 11th to 17th Century* (Chichester, 1971); "The Buildings of Burford: a Cotswold Town in the Fourteenth to Nineteenth Centuries," *Perspectives in English Urban History,* Alan Everitt, ed. (London, 1973), pp. 60-90.

17   W. A. Pantin, "Medieval English Town-House Plans," *Medieval Archaeology,* VI-VII (1962-3), pp. 202-239; Peter Eden, "Smaller Post-medieval Houses in Eastern England," *East Anglian Studies,* ed. L. M. Munby (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 71-93.

18   John E. C. Peters, *The Development of Farm Buildings in Western Lowland Staffordshire up to 1880* (Manchester, 1969); Nigel Harvey, A History of Farm Buildings in England and Wales (Newton Abbot, 1970).

19   "Saxon and Medieval Settlement-Pattern in the Region of Chalton, Hampshire," *Medieval Archaeology,* XVI (1972), pp. 1-12.

20   B. Cox, "The Significance of the Distribution of English Place-names in -*ham* in the Midlands and East Anglia," *The English Place-Name Society Journal,* V (1972-3), pp. 15-73; Kenneth Cameron, *Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs: the Place-Name Evidence* (Nottingham, 1965); Margaret Gelling, "Some Notes on Warwickshire Place-Names," *Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society Transactions,* LXXXVI (1974), pp. 59-79; Gillian Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Settlement Names in Yorkshire* (Copenhagen, 1972).

21   "Anglo-Saxon England to 1042," *Agrarian History of England and Wales,* I. ii (1972), pp. 385-525; "Early Territorial Organization in England and Wales," *Geografiska Annaler,* XLIII (1961), pp. 174-181.

22   Desmond Bonney, "Early Boundaries in Wessex," *Archaeology and the Landscape,* ed. P. J. Fowler (London, 1972), pp. 168-186; Christopher Taylor, *Dorset* (London, 1970).

23   Christopher Taylor, "The Anglo-Saxon Countryside," *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape,* ed Trevor Rowley; *British Archaeological Reports,* VI (1974), pp. 5-15.

common.[24] This last myth was exploded (though not without opposition from
J. Z. Titow[25]) by Joan Thirsk[26]. The most convincing dating for the estab-
lishment of the first common field systems to the period and possible example
of the Scandinavian colonization is now that propounded by Finberg[27]. The
widespread nucleated settlement of 1086, usually inferred from Domesday
Book for most lowland areas, may thus then have been the product of rela-
tively recent Saxon expansion, though B. K. Roberts suggests the peopling of
some planned rural settlements after that date in Durham[28].

With the evolving pattern of early settlement more realistically adjusted,
historians of English localities are broadly concerned with three basic and
inter-related areas of study: regional structures and development, typologies
of rural and urban settlements, and the detailed examination of individual
communities.

The first of these, the definition of a region, has varied according to the
historical pre-occupations of the writer. The most substantial advances have
clearly been made by the historians of settlement and agriculture. H. E.
Hallam has traced the reclamation and exploitation of the Lincolnshire fens
in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries;[29] J. B. Harley has illustrated the post-
Conquest population explosion in the forest of Arden.[30] Particularly influen-
tial in this respect was the publication in 1967 of *The Agrarian History of
England and Wales, IV, 1500-1640*, edited by Joan Thirsk, in which the essen-
tial variations of arable and pastoral farming practices between and within
regions, and the emergence of regional specialization, were outlined by
Thirsk herself. A somewhat different interpretation, however, was propoun-
ded by E. Kerridge.[31] The result of such work has been a substantial increase
in the number of regional studies undertaken by historical geographers deal-
ing in particular with the different kinds of field-systems the range of which

24   T. H. Aston, "The Origins of the Manor in England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical
Society,* 5th ser., VIII (1958), pp. 59-83; H. P. R. Finberg, "Continuity or Cataclysm," "Roman
and Saxon Withington," and "Charltons and Carltons," *Lucerna* (London) 1964, pp. 1-65, 144-160.

25   "Medieval England and the Open-field System," *Past and Present,* XXXII (1965), pp. 86-102.

26   "The Common Fields," *Past and Present,* XXIX (1964), pp. 3-25; "The Origin of the Common
Fields," *Past and Present,* XXXIII (1966), pp. 142-7.

27   "Anglo-Saxon England to 1042," *Agrarian History of England and Wales, A.D. 43-1042*
(1972), pp. 385-525.

28   "Village Plans in County Durham: a Preliminary Statement." *Medieval Archaeology,* XVI
(1972), pp. 33-56.

29   *Settlement and Society: a Study of the Early Agrarian History of South Lincolnshire,* Cam-
bridge Studies in Economic History, (Cambridge, 1965).

30   "Population Trends and Agricultural Developments from the Warwickshire Hundred Rolls
of 1279," Economic History Review, XI (1958), pp. 8-18.

31   *The Agricultural Revolution* (London, 1967).

is impressively presented in the work of H. R. H. Baker and R. A. Butlin.[32] In all of this a possible danger, which has received insufficient attention, is a tendency towards a species of mono-causal explanation based ultimately on topographical determinism. G. C. Homans has been a solitary voice in advancing alternative ethnological factors,[33] though Roberts seems to come close in the conclusion to his study of West Midland field-systems.[34]

Topographical contrasts rightly (though sometimes somewhat spectrally) underlie other regional writings, even when the approach is specifically socio-economic as is the case in John Hatcher's study of Cornwall between 1300 and 1500[35], and in F. R. H. Du Boulay's work on the lordship of Canterbury[36]; or economic and political as in R. B. Smith's study of the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1530 and 1546[37]. The first two of these three authors, moreover, are geographically and manorially limited by the provenance of their rich documentation (the Duchy of Cornwall and the Archbishopric of Canterbury). It is not until we turn to Bouch and Jones' chronologically sweeping survey of the Lake counties[38], to R. H. Hilton's remarkable coverage of the West Midlands at the end of the thirteenth century[39] and, rather later, to C. W. Chalklin's review of Kent in the seventeenth[40] and to A. F. J. Brown's Essex in the eighteenth[41], that more integrated analyses of both town and country, and of social life as opposed to status, fully emerge.

Yet the social dimensions of regional history are increasingly evident. "The County Community" of the local gentry, particularly between 1540 and 1660, has been the object of widespread study in Alan Everitt's Kent[42], J. T. Cliffe's Yorkshire[43], Mervyn James' Durham[44] and Hassell-Smith's Norfolk[45].

32   *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 1973).

33   "The Explanation of English Regional Differences," *Past and Present*, XLII (1969), pp. 18-34.

34   "Field Systems of the West Midlands", Baker and Butlin, *op. cit.,* pp. 188-231.

35   *Rural Economy and Society in the Duchy of Cornwall, 1300-1500* (Cambridge, 1970).

36   *The Lordship of Canterbury: an Essay on Medieval Society* (London, 1956).

37   *Land and Politics in the England of Henry VIII: the West Riding of Yorkshire 1530-1546* (Oxford, 1970).

38   C. M. L. Bouch, and G. P. Jones, *The Lake Counties 1500-1830: A Social and Economic History* (Manchester, 1961).

39   *A Medieval Society: the West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1966).

40   *Seventeenth-Century Kent: a Social and Economics History* (London, 1965).

41   *Essex at Work 1700-1815*, Essex Record Office Publications, no 49 (London 1965).

42   *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion*, 1640-1660 (Leicester, 1966).

43   *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War* (London, 1969).

44   *Family, Lineage and Civil Society: a Study of Society, Politics, and Mentality in the Durham Region 1500-1640* (Oxford, 1974).

45   A. Hassell-Smith, *County and Court: Government and Politics in Norfolk, 1558-1603* (Oxford, 1974).

M. J. Bennett looks back to the early fifteenth century in Cheshire[46]; Esther Moir takes the story, at least with regard to the Justices of the Peace, into late eighteenth century Gloucestershire[47]. Below this class level, social contact over perhaps more restricted areas than the county is receiving some attention in contrasted ways. J. M. Martin has drawn attention to the supra-parochial spread of landholding at the freeholder level in eighteenth century Warwickshire[48], "neighbourhoods" as he calls them, but nobody has systematically followed the idea through. Alan Macfarlane's study of "cunning men" or white wizards, with their own little hinterlands of potential customers in sixteenth century Essex similarly implies, *inter multa alia*, the existance of mini-peasant regions.[49] Much the same is apparent in later times when it is possible to calculate either the distance of a father's home from the parish where his adult offspring's children were baptised, or the range of village marriage horizons.[50]

Movements of population, in fact, are receiving increasing notice, and ought perhaps to help define regions with more precision than the subjective adoption of the county as the unit of study. Ambrose Raftis has emphasised the turn-over of population in the Huntingdonshire manors in the fifteenth century[51], and Laslett and Harrison have given close attention to the remarkable mobility of the in-servant population in Nottinghamshire two centuries later.[52] George Redmonds' surname studies have shown the social importance of the Yorkshire dale as a geographical container[53]. Perhaps even more important than the movements between rural settlements, however, was the rural-urban migration. The distributions of locative surnames denoting places of origin have been used to good effect for medieval urban populations by

46   "A County Community: Social Cohesion amongst the Cheshire Gentry 1400-1425," *Northern History*, VIII (1973), pp. 24-44.

47   *Local Government in Gloucestershire 1775-1800: a Study of the Justices of the Peace*, Publications of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Records Section, VIII, (1969).

48   "The Parliamentary Enclosure Movement and Rural Society in Warwickshire," *Agricultural History Review*, XV (1967), pp. 19-39.

49   *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England; a Regional and Comparative Study* (London, 1970).

50   David G. Hey, *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974); Bessie Maltby, "Parish Registers and the Problem of Mobility," *Local Population Studies*, VI (1971), pp. 32-42; B. A. Holderness, "Personal Mobility in Some Rural Parishes of Yorkshire, 1777-1822," *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, XLII (1971), pp. 444-454.

51   *Tenure and Mobility: Studies in the Social History of the Medieval English Village*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, (Toronto, 1964).

52   Peter Laslett, and John Harrison, "Clayworth and Cogenhoe," *Historical Essays Presented to David Ogg*, ed. H. E. Bell and R. L. Ollard (London, 1963), pp. 157-184.

53   *Yorkshore West Riding*, English Surnames Series, ed. R. A. McKinley, I (Chichester, 1973).

E. M. Carus-Wilson and R. H. Hilton[54], and, on broader and more systematic lines, for sixteenth century Norfolk by McKinley[55]. A. F. Butcher has traced rural-urban migrants in the late medieval Kent[56], while Peter Clark has discussed the different levels of motivation involved in such mobility for the same county between 1580 and 1640[57]. The contemporary movement of vagrants in different parts of the country has been examined by Paul Slack[58]. In a controversial article, finally, E. A. Wrigley has sought to show that a surprisingly substantial proportion of the provincial population must have been temporarily sucked into the capital city for at least some period of its life in the eighteenth century.[59]

The economic nexus between town and country or town and town, so long neglected, is also at last being studied, though the moral for the definition of regions has not been drawn. The regional hinterland of Saxon Oxford has been defined by Eric Jope[60]; Carus-Wilson has elucidated the wide Midland region which exported through the medieval port of the Wash[61]; while Coleman has shown how imports to fifteenth century Southampton were disseminated deep inland[62]. The whole subject of inland trade and marketing generally between 1500 and 1640 was thrown open by Everitt in 1967[63]; studies of Preston, Worcester, and York, have demonstrated the immediate market

54 "The First Half-Century of the Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XVIII, 1965, pp. 46-63; *A Medieval Society: the West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1966).

55 R. A. McKinley, *Norfolk Surnames in the Sixteenth Century*, Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, 2nd ser., no. 2, (Leicester, 1969).

56 "The Origins of Romney Freemen, 1433-1523," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XXVUU (1974), pp. 16-27.

57 "The Migrant in Kentish Towns 1580-1640," Clark, Peter, and Slack, Paul, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700, Essays in Urban History* (London, 1972), pp. 117-163.

58 "Vagrants and Vagrancy in England 1598-1864" *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XXVII (1974), pp. 360-379.

59 "A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750," *Past and Present*, XXXVII (1967), pp. 44-70.

60 E. M. Jope, "Saxon Oxford and its Region," *Dark Age Britain*, ed. D. B. Harden (London, 1956).

61 E. M. Carus-Wilson, "The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash" *Medieval Archaeology*, VI-VII (1962-3), pp. 182-201.

62 O. Coleman, "Some Trade and Prosperity in the Fifteenth Century: Some Aspects of the Trade of Southampton," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XVI (1963-4), pp. 9-22.

63 Alan Everitt, "The Marketing of Agricultural Produce," *Agrarian History of England and Wales, IV, 1500-1640*, (1967), pp. 466-592.

areas of their respective centres at about the same time[64]. The reconstruction of late nineteenth century carriers' routes from villages around Leicester, has revealed even more intimate levels of connection[65]. Similarly, the later pattern of urban domination over local rural industry has been described with regard to late seventeenth century Norwich[66], and mapped for the eighteenth and early nineteenth centures for Leicester[67] (framework knitting) and for Coventry[68] (silk-ribbon weaving).

But if the concept of a region defined administratively often begins to look less relevant when compared with these other, more sensitive, social, economic and demographic indicators, so too does the traditional emphasis on treating regional society as a layered cake of different classes that remained geographically undifferentiated within themselves. The most healthy antidote to this approach, and one of the more significant recent developments in English local history, is the new tendency to construct typologies of both rural and urban communities. Of these, however, the former are the most closely studied, although there is not consensus between the two rather different treatments of the problem.

Chronologically, the first of these approaches, which has strong explanatory powers, and has stimulated the most research, is that which stems from Joan Thirsk's work (1967) on the 1500-1649 period.[69] According to this taxonomy, which was substantiated by Everitt[70], rural communities should be classified according to the nature of their regional topography: lowland arable - mixed farming - country, or pastoral areas of woodland, moor, or fen. When studied in groups along these lines, certain common, distinguishing characteristics are revealed with regard not only to obvious differences in land-use and field systems, but also to population densities and sizes, social structures, inheri-

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64 Alan D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973); H. B. Rodgers, "The Market Area of Preston in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Geographical Studies,* III i (1956), pp. 49-55; D. M. Palliser, "York under the Tudors: the Trading Life of the Northern Capital," *Perspectives in English Urban History,* ed., Alan Everitt (London, 1973), pp. 39-59.

65 Alan Everitt, "Introduction" and "Town and Country in Victorian Leicestershire: the Role of the Village Carrier," pp. 1-15, 213-240.

66 Penelope Corfield, "A Provincial Capital in the Late Seventeenth Century: the Case of Norwich," Clark and Slack, *op. cit.,* pp. 263-310.

68 John Prest, *The Industrial Revolution in Coventry* (Oxford, 1960).

67 L. A. Parker, "Hosiery", *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Leicester,* Vol. III (London, 1955), pp. 2-23.

69 First outlined in her "Industries in the Countryside," *Essays in Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England in Honour of R. H. Tawney,* ed. F. J. Fisher (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 70-88.

70 "The Marketing of Agricultural Produce," *Agrarian History of England and Wales,* IV (1967), pp. 466-592.

tance customs, and the incidence of by-employments and rural industries. Following this lead, studies have been completed on the forests of Northamptonshire[71], the agricultural and industrial variety in Staffordshire[72], and the medieval forest[73], part of the Cambridgeshire fens[74] and three topographically contrasted communities in the same country[75]. Inheritance patterns for an earlier period have been investigated[76], the pastoral origins of the leather industry have been discussed[77], and the rural metal-working industry in two pastoral areas has been notably analysed[78]. A note of dissension, however, is struck by G. F. R. Spenceley who inconveniently traces the origins of the pillow-lace industry in Buckinghamshire to a number of *arable* farming areas[79]. To these distinguishing marks, Everitt adds the early distribution of religious radicalism in the pre-civil war period. while his recent study of the topographical pattern of rural dissent takes the story into the nineteenth century[80], as does the more detailed work of Hey on Yorkshire[81]. In what may be a preview to a major theme of the next volume of *The Agrarian History*, Thirsk follows the implications of these regional differences for land-holding and land-use through the seventeenth century, and differentiates broadly between the developing rural backgrounds to the agricultural revolution in the

71   P. A. J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: a Study of their Economy 1558-1714*, Northamptonshire Record Society, XXIII (1968).

72   Joan Thirsk, "Horn and Thorn in Staffordshire: The Economy of a Pastoral County," *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies*, IX (1969), pp. 1-16.

73   Jean Birrell, "Peasant Craftsmen in the Medieval Forest," *Agricultural History Review*, XVII (1969), pp. 91-107.

74   J. R. Ravensdale, *Liable to Floods: Village Landscape on the Edge of the Fens A.D. 450-1850* (Cambridge, 1974).

75   Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974).

76   Rosamund J. Faith, "Peasant Familites and Inheritance Customs in Medieval England," *Agricultural History Review*, XIV (1966), pp. 77-95.

77   L. A. Clarkson, "The Leather Crafts in Tudor and Stuart England," *Ag. H. R.*, XIV (1966), pp. 25-39.

78   M. Rowlands, "industry and Social Change in Staffordshire, 1660-1760" *Lichfield and South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, IX (1967-8), pp. 37-58; David G. Hey, *The Rural Metalworkers of the Sheffield Region: a Study of Rural Industry before the Industrial Revolution*, Department of English Local History, Occasional Papers, 2nd ser. no 5 (Leicester, 1972).

79   "The Origins of the English Pillow Lace Industry," *Agricultural History Review*, XXI (1973), pp. 81-93.

80   Alan Everitt, "Farm Labourers," *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, IV, 1500-1640 (1967), pp. 396-465; *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the Nineteenth Century*, Department of English Local History, Occasional Papers, second series, no. 4 (Leicester, 1972).

81   David G. Hey, "The Pattern of Nonconformity in South Yorkshire, 1660-1851," *Northern History*, VIII (1973), pp. 86-118.

mixed farming lowland zone, and the industrial revolution in the pastoral highland zone.[82] The accompanying increase in rural manufacture in the former, is traced in some detail with respect to stocking knitting in the central Midlands.[83]

Another form of classification, which has been discussed in more conceptual terms, is that propounded for the later period by Dennis Mills.[84] This is essentially a social structural taxonomy which goes back to a basic distinction made by writers on the poor law in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries between large "open" villages, dominated by peasant free-holders with sizable populations of poor, and "closed" squire-dominated hamlets or small villages. The former might contain industries, more shops and perhaps a nonconformist chapel. M. V. J. Seaborne would add the wretched mud-walled houses that often characterized rural slums in the midlands,[85] and from which the labourers would walk elsewhere to work[86]. In this context E. J. Hobsbawm also suggests a higher crime-rate.[87] The almost wholly agricultural, closed villages on the other hand usually contained the church and were estate centred.[88] These distinctive appellations, usefully illustrated at a local Lincolnshire level by Alan Rogers,[89] are often more accurately applied to parishes than to communities within them: the inhabitants of extensive open parishes in forest country, for example, more probably lived in dispersed farms and hamlets than large nucleated villages. In this way, Martin was able to test the varying susceptibility of Warwickshire parishes to eighteenth century enclosure[90], while Holderness, who defined the terms with regard to the

82 Joan Thirsk, "Seventeenth-century Agriculture and Social Change," *Land, Church and People: Essays Presented to Professor H. P. R. Finberg,* ed. Joan Thirsk; Ag. H. R., XVIII (1970), Supplement, pp. 148-177.

83 S. D. Chapman, "The Genesis of the British Hosiery Industry 1600-1700," *Textile History,* III (1972), pp. 7-50.

84 Dennis R. Mills, "English Villages in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries; A Sociological Approach", *Amateur* (now Local) *Historian.,* VI (1965), pp. 271-8.

85 "Cob Cottages in Northamptonshire," *Northamptonshire Past and Present,* III (1964), pp. 215-228.

86 Dennis R. Mills, "The Geographical Effects of the Laws of Settlement in Nottinghamshire: an Analysis of Francis Howell's Report, 1848," *English Rural Communities: the Impact of a Specialised Economy,* ed. Dennis R. Mills (London, 1973), pp. 182-192.

87 E. J. Hobsbawm, and G. Rude, *Captain Swing* (Woking and London, 1969).

88 Michael A. Haviden, *Estate Villages: a Study of the Berkshire Villages of Ardington and Lockinge,* with contributions by D. S. Thornton and P. D. Wood, Reading University Museum of Rural Life (Reading, 1966).

89 Alan Rogers, ed., *Stability and Change: Some Aspects of North and South Rauceby in the Nineteenth Century,* Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1969).

90 "The Parliamentary Enclosure Movement and Rural Society in Warwickshire," *Agricultural History Review* (1967), pp. 19-39.

relative presence or absence of wage-labour, looked more widely at regional variations in the incidence of such classifiable parishes.[91]

A major problem in respect of both systems of typology, and particularly that which refers to open and closed societies, is that a substantial proportion of settlements obstinately resist neat classification. Three additional species have been outlined by Everitt.[92] They comprise boundary settlements, industrial villages, and villages with a market, scores of which last had existed in the middle ages[93]. Despite the subsequent abandonment of many such as mini-trading centres, they often emerged in later times as classic open-villages.

Rural markets, however, also represented the lowest form of urban species, the categorization of which is similarly beginning to comprise two very different approaches. On the one hand an emphasis is being placed on town origin. If in a few cases some cities, like Canterbury, are seen as coming through from the Roman period, below that level Everitt makes a distinction between what he calls "primary towns" — with respectable continuous histories of service to their relatively restricted hinterlands from tribal times — and medieval planted towns.[94] These latter were either of later Anglo-Saxon foundation[95] or post-Conquest[96], or even slightly later[97], though the streets of all three were usually planned in a grid-pattern. Usually less important in the medieval urban hierarchy, at a level immediately above the rural market, appear to have existed a multitude of petty "boroughs" which are listed with the more important centres in a useful general gazetteer by Beresford and Finberg[98] and plotted for Staffordshire by Palliser[99].

91   B. A. Holderness, " 'Open' and 'Close' Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Agricultural History Review,* XX (1972), pp. 126-

92   Alan Everitt, *New Avenues in English Local History* (Leicester, 1970); *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the Nineteenth Century,* Department of English Local History, Occasional Papers, second series, no. 4 (Leicester, 1972).

93   For example see Bryan E. Coates, "The Origins and Distribution of Markets and Fairs in Medieval Derbyshire," *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal,* LXXXV (1965), pp. 92-111.

94   Alan Everitt, "The Banburys of England," *Urban History Yearbook* (1974), pp. 28-38.

95   Martin Biddle, and V. Hill — P.X.A., and David, "Late Saxon Planned Towns," *The Antiquaries Journal,* LI (1971), pp. 70-85.

96   Maurice Beresford, and John G. Hurst, *Deserted Medieval Villages: Studies* (London, 1971).

97   C. W. Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns of Georgian England: a Study of the Building Process, 1740-1820* (London, 1974); "The Making of Some New Towns, c. 1600-1720," *Rural Change and Urban Growth 1500-1800, Essays in English Regional History in Honour of W. G. Hoskins* (London, 1974), pp. 229-252.

98   Maurice Beresford and H. P. R. Finberg, *English Medieval Boroughs: a Handlist* (Newton Abbot, 1973).

99   D. M. Palliser, "The Boroughs of Medieval Staffordshire," *The North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies,* XII (1972), pp. 63-73.

Alternative usually post-medieval attempts to characterize towns depend largely on the identification of certain urban and mostly economic functions. For the early sixteenth century W. G. Hoskins differentiated between the occupational structures of some early sixteenth century midland towns;[100] J. Cornwall examined contrasting distribution of wealth in large market towns;[101] and John Patten has systematically applied a graduated scale of non-agricultural occupational intensity to contrasted urban and rural communities in Suffolk.[102] A more elaborate scaling of functions is available in Clark and Slack's general discussion, where a hierarchy of towns is proposed and examined under the pressure of a two hundred year period down to 1700.[103] Some of the more important on-going characteristics of the medium sized provincial town are explored by Everitt.[104] Labels become simpler, and correspondingly less useful, with the advent of later single-economy towns — dock towns, spa towns, coal towns, railway towns, and holiday resorts.

The principal pre-occupation of most local historians, however, is the in-depth study of a particular community within its local and regional context. Perhaps two related trends are observable with regard to recent analyses of rural areas. The first is a move away from what had become the dominant theme of much such writing — the decline of the traditional peasant economy particularly under the twin impact of enclosure for commercial farming and the growth of rural manufacturing. After its classic treatment in W. G. Hoskins's *The Midland Peasant*, which traces the history of a Leicestershire village from settlement down to the nineteenth century, this theme would be difficult to repeat with originality. More recent writers, however, have taken much shorter periods. Harvey's study of thirteenth and fourteenth century Cuxham in Oxfordshire and its fields and village was the most elaborate study of a medieval village to appear for decades,[105] though Chibnall's work on Sherington in Buckinghamshire — essentially a series of studies — contained an even more detailed reconstruction of an evolving medieval field-system.[106]

100   "English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century," *ProvincialEngland, Essays in Social and Economic History* (London, 1963), pp. 68-85.

101   "English Country Towns in the Fifteen Twenties," *Economic History Review,* 2nd ser., XV (1962-3), pp. 54-69.

102   "Village and Town: an Occupational Study," *Agricultural History Review,* XX (1972), pp. 1-16.

103   Peter Clark, and Paul Slack, eds., "Introduction," *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700, Essays in Urban History* (London, 1973), pp. 1-56.

104   Alan Everitt, "Introduction" and "Town and Country in Victorian Leicestershire: the Role of the Village Carrier," *Perspectives in English Urban History,* ed. Alan Everitt (London, 1973), pp. 213-240.

105   P. D. A. Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village: Cuxham 1240-1400* (Oxford, 1965).

106   A. C. Chibnal, *Sherington: Fiefs and Fields of a Buckinghamshire Village* (Cambridge, 1965).

The second perceptible trend is that both the recently published books on particular communities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries not only deliberately reflect the topographical typology already discussed, but also transcend the limitations of largely economic themes. Both Hey's Myddle, a Shropshire woodland community,[107] and Spufford's three geographically contrasting Cambridgeshire communities[108] are examined from social and cultural viewpoints as well. The former ranges from harvest crises to community attitudes; the latter dissects the problems of literacy and religion amongst the peasantry. Shorter periods and the selection of communities that are exceptionally well documented, have thus permitted much more detailed analysis. Hey, in particular, on the basis of a modified form of family reconstitution blended with the unique observations of a contemporary literary gossip on every family in his parish, is able to probe the significance of rural kinship and neighbourliness at very intimate levels. There can be little doubt that this form of anthropological treatment will receive increasing attention in the near future, and may well come ultimately to be applied most rewardingly to groups of parishes which comprise the sort of peasant regions indicated above. For earlier periods, the work of Raftis, based on medieval manor-court rolls, points towards similar in-depth sociological and demographic analysis.[109]

The even greater detail involved in the case of towns, however, no doubt accounts for the failure of most serious historians to attempt complete urban biographies. Notable exceptions are Hill's monumental, if traditional, volumes on Lincoln[110], Gillett's Grimsby[111] and Simmon's Leicester.[112] But the future in this respect clearly lies either with teamwork as in the recent urban volumes of the Victoria County histories for York, Hull, Coventry and

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107 David G. Hey, *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974).

108 Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974).

109 *Tenure and Mibility: Studies in the Social History of the Medieval English Village* (Toronto, 1964); "Social Structure in Five East Midland Villages: a Study of Possibilities in the Use of Court Roll data," *Economic History Review,* XVIII, 1965, pp. 83-100.

110 Sir Francis Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1948); *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1956); *Georgian Lincoln* (Cambridge 1966); *Victorian Lincoln* (Cambridge 1974).

111 Edward Gillett, *A History of Grimsby* (Oxford, 1970).

112 Jack Simmons, *Leicester Past and Present:* Vol. I.; *Ancient Borough to 1860*; Vol. II; *Modern City, 1860-1974.*

Warwick,[113] for example; or with periodization as in the case of the appropriately magisterial series on London which is currently appearing[114].

Other than these, the dearth of studies in the round over the last decade or so, is conspicuous. The only medieval city to be so studied is Urry's Canterbury in the twelfth century,[115] and that is handicapped by the inevitable patchiness of his early documentation. For the Tudor period, apart from a series of separately published studies on York[116] there is Atkinson's Winchester[117] (which is heavily dependent on one major source) and Dyer's Worcester.[118] This last study represents a considerable step forward, but its detailed, multi-faceted analysis, which is firmly set in a regional context, appears to have no integrating principle other than the place. Corfield, by contrast, takes a tighter look at Norwich's function as a provincial capital in the late seventeenth century.[119] For the nineteenth century, Church examines industrialized Nottingham from a largely economic point of view[120], while Newton discusses the cathedral city of Exeter with a particular emphasis on politics[121]. These last four studies, however, perhaps represent the furthest that historians have reached from taking towns essentially as vehicles for analysing particular major themes — perhaps most popularly, oligarchy and/

113   *York: the City of York*, ed. P. M. Tillott (London, 1961); *Warwick: Vol. VIII: The City of Coventry and Borough of Warwick*, ed. W. B. Stephens (London, 1969); *York East Riding: Vol. I: The City of Kingston upon Hull*, ed. K. J. Allinson (London, 1969).

114   George Rude, *Hanoverian London*, 1714-1808 (London, 1971); F. H. W. Sheppard, *London 1808-1870: the Infernam Wen* (London, 1971); Christopher Brooke, assisted by Gillian Keir, *London 800-1216, the Shaping of a City* (London, 1975).

115   *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings* (London, 1967).

116   D. M. Palliser, *The Reformation in York 1534-1553,* Borthwick Papers no. 40 (York, 1971); "The Trade Gilds of Tudor York," Clark and Slack, *op. cit.,* pp. 86-116; "Epidemics in Tudor York," *Northern History,* VIII (1973); "York under the Tudors: the Trading Life of the Northern Capital," Everitt, ed., *Perspectives,* pp. 39-59.

117   Tom Atkinson, *Elizabethan Winchester* (London, 1963).

118   Alan D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973).

119   Penelope Corfield, "A Provincial Capital in the late Seventeenth Century: the Case of Norwich," Clark and Slack, *op. cit.,* pp. 263-310.

120   R. A. Church, *Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town: Victorian Nottingham 1815-1900* (London, 1966).

121   Robert Newton, *Victorian Exeter 1837-1914* (Leicester, 1968).

or politics[122]; shipping[123]; the poor[124] and buildings[125], working-class dwellings in particular[126]. This is certainly not to criticize the perfectly proper pre-occupations of these writers. Nor in quoting but a fraction of the work going on, is it to suggest that urban analyses are limited in their aims. It is merely to emphasize that from the local historian's viewpoint, the integrated, holistic treatment of the pre-industrial or industrialising town as a community — however loose the reality may have been in practice — lags behind rural analyses. Some perspectives on the difficult problem of treating towns as wholes are, however, opening up. For the later periods, in particular, the expansion of the physical fabric of buildings and streets may be seen as a reflection of the needs of all levels of society concerned.[127] For earlier times, alternatively, a brief attempt has been made to examine the interlocking of a late medieval social structure.[128] More sociological yet are the wide possibilities opened up

122   John Foster, *Class Struggle and Industrial Revolution* (London, 1974); E. P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth-Century Urban Government* (London, 1974); W. G. Hoskins, "The Elisabethan Merchants of Exeter," *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays presented to Sir John Neale,* ed. S. T. Bindoff, J. Hurstfield, C. H. Williams (London, 1961), pp. 163-187; A. M. Johnson, Politics in Chester during the Civil Wars and the Inter-regnum 1640-62, Clark and Slack, *op. cit.,* pp. 204-236; G. W. Jones, *Borough Politics: a Study of the Wolverhampton Town Council, 1888-1964* (London, 1969); Alan Rogers, "Late Medieval Stamford: a Study of the Town Council 1465-1492," Everitt, ed., *Perspectives,* pp. 16-38; R. G. Wilson, *Gentlemen Merchants: the Merchant Community in Leeds, 1700-1830* (Manchester, 1972); Gwyn A. Williams, *Medieval London: from Commune to Capital* (London, 1963); Roger Howell, Jr., Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution; A study of the Civil War in North England (Oxford, 1967).

123   Ralph David, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull 1500-1700* (East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1964); Francis E. Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: an Economic History of a Port 1700-1970* (Newton Abbott, 1971); D. M. Woodward, *The Trade of Elizabethan Chester* University of Hull Occasional Papers in Economic and Social History, no. 4 (Hull, 1970).

124   J. F. Pound, "An Elizabethan Census of the Poor," University of Birmingham Historical Journal, VIII (1962), pp. 136-161; Paul A. Slack "Poverty and Politics in Salisbury 1597-1666," Clark and Slack, *op. cit.,* pp. 164-203.

125   R. C. W. Cox, "The Old Centre of Croydon: Victorian Decay and Redevelopment," Everitt, *op. cit.,* 1973, pp. 184-212; C. W. Chalklin, "The Making of Some New Towns, c. 1600-1720," *Rural Change and Urban Growth 1500-1800, Essays in English Regional History in Honour of W. G. Hoskins* (London, 1974), pp. 229-252.

126   M. J. Power, "East London Housing in the Seventeenth Century," Clark and Slack, *op. cit.,* pp. 237-262; Stanley Chapman, ed., *The History of Working-Class Housing: a Symposium* (Newton Abbott, 1971).

127   H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: a Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester, 1961); F. M. L. Thompson, *Hampstead: Building a Borough, 1650-1964* (London! Boston, 1974).

128   Charles Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen: the Communal Year at Coventry 1450-1550," Clark and Slack, *op. cit.,* pp. 57-85.

by the censuses, especially with regard to the impact of the urban revolution on family structure.[129]

Both rural and urban studies, in fact, are betraying a growing concern with the analysis of society. The technical tools of the social sciences are thus likely to be increasingly mobilised in the future. Quantitatively, outstanding examples have been set by Wrigley[130] and Anderson[131]. Qualitatively, seventeenth century family attitudes have been dissected by Macfarlane[132], who is a trained anthropologist. The same writer has closely analysed witchcraft in Essex between 1560 and 1680 as a community problem. Phythian-Adams is currently suggesting an analytical framework for studying folkloris rituals of the pre-Reformation period.[133] For the eighteenth century, Malcolmson's similar functionalist approach to popular rural recreations, is likely to be explored further.[134] In addition, the work of Evans on rural life in Suffolk before 1914, in particular, has belatedly alerted historians to the possibilities — and to the technical problems — of using oral evidence.[135] Fortunately the specialised study of vanishing local dialects is far advanced, and local historians now have the benefit of an atlas indicating regional patterns.[136] It seems in fact that the massive advances brought about by a new sensitivity to topographical factors over the last decade, may well come to be matched by a new understanding of local cultures in the next. Local history in England is coming of age.

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129   Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971); Alan Armstrong, *Stability and Change in an English County Town: a Social Study of York 1801-1851* (London, 1974).

130   E. A. Wrigley, "Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XIX (1966), pp. 82-109; "Mortality in Pre-Industrial England: the Example of Colyton, Devon, over three Centuries," *Daedalus* (Spring 1968), pp. 546-580).

131   Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971).

132   Alan MacFarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin: a Seventeenth Century Clergyman. An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1970).

133   *Local History and Folklore: a New Framework,* The Standing Conference for English Local History (London, 1975).

134   Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973).

135   George Ewart Evans, *Where Beards Wag All: the Relevance of the Oral Tradition* (London, 1970).

136   Harold Orton, and Natalia Wright, *A Work Geography of England* (London, New York, San Francisco, 1974).

137   Morgan I. Watkin, "A B O Blood Groups, Human History and Language in Herefordshire with Special Reference to the Low B Frequency in Europe," *Heredity,* XX (1965), pp. 83-95.