The Effects of Kinship on Land Transfer: A Study of Settlement on the Cumberland Plateau of Kentucky and Tennessee

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Abstract
This thesis examines specific aspects of nineteenth century Euroamerican settlement on the Cumberland Plateau of Kentucky and Tennessee. Primary historical documents i.e. county deed records, are used as the principal data source in a study of the effects of kin relationship on the process of land transfer. Blevins family property transfers, recorded between 1800 and 1910 in Wayne County, Kentucky and Scott County, Tennessee are examined systematically to: 1) test previous ethnographic and ethnohistoric emphases placed on kinship as a primary settlement determinant and the principal basis for local group solidarity; and 2) demonstrate the utility of deed record information to historical, geographical and anthropological studies of settlement.

Analysis procedures involve synchronic and diachronic comparisons of deed record variables, i.e. transfer frequency, tract acreage, and distance from the transferred tract to the grantors' homeplace, calculated for transactions among Blevins kin, and between Blevins family members and non-kin. Records of land transfer are evaluated as a logical data source for investigating aspects of historic settlement by reconstructing local Blevins family property history, utilizing a sample of sequentially-ordered land transfers.

Examinations of land transfers indicate that variation in purchases and sales are largely dependent upon changing social and economic conditions and prevalent states of settlement. Overall results dispute previous contentions emphasizing preferences shown toward kin in land transfer and support expanded use of county deed records in further research.

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