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English Summaries

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Jon Mathieu, Dialogue and Controversy in Historical-Anthropological Family Research on the Alps since 1974

The Hidden Frontier. Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley, by John W. Cole and Eric R. Wolf, was first published fifty years ago. The book marked the beginning of family research in the Alpine area, paying particular attention to diversity. Since 1974, many family studies on the Alpine area have been published, most of them on individual places and regions, a few on the entire Alpine area. The authors came from different directions and their objectives were different. How did they interact? How did they perceive each other, learn from each other, argue with each other? And how did this affect the 'state of the art'? These are the questions I would like to explore in my paper. The focus can of necessity be on only a limited number of such interactions. The starting point is the idea that dialogues are not always good and controversies not always bad. I treat these expressions quite neutrally. But there are limits. Both excessive rigidity and excessive elasticity in argumentation can be problematic.

Dionigi Albera, Rethinking Alpine Organisation: Historical Typologies and Processes

Some fifteen years have gone by since the publication of my book *Au fil des générations*. In this work, I endeavoured to construct a comparative perspective on domestic organisation in the Alps. Defining a tripartite typology was crucial, leading us to identify three main configurations within the chain. This rather complex taxonomy was an attempt to contextualise the dimension of family life by taking into account the way it interfaces with kinship and territorial organisation. Since then, several researchers have discussed it, raising a number of

questions, pointing out limitations and proposing integrations. In this article, I develop a discussion of some of these elements.

Aleksander Panjek, Miha Zobec, Elite Godfathers: Popularity of a Family in the Village Community and the Changing Patterns of Godparenthood (Karst, 1625–1914)

The article addresses an elite family in the village of Tomaj on the Karst (Slovenia) over the long run, focusing on the attractiveness of its members as godfathers. The research is based on parish baptismal registers, court files and a family archive. The article first sketches some general characteristics of godfatherhood in the Karst area at the parish and at the family level, and then focuses on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of godparents within the Černe family between 1625 and 1914. By cross-referencing information on the life of several male family members with data on godfatherhood, it verifies the connection between their social position and misdeeds and the fluctuation of godfatherhoods. Godparenthood patterns noticed in the case studied in the Karst between the late seventeenth and the late nineteenth century reflect wider European trends, although data on a single elite family is not enough to justify generalising on the whole rural society of the area. On the other hand, the use of godparenthood to measure prestige and popularity seems to work well, reflecting the fluctuations in social prestige associated to social position as well as to the misdeeds of prominent family members. The method works quite convincingly for the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, while towards the end of the nineteenth century social changes brought about interferences that increasingly affected its results.

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Leonida Ravšelj, Family, Farm, and Self-sufficiency in the Karst Region: Tomaj in 1822

Farm subsistence is one of the most crucial questions in Slovenian rural historiography. While it is often believed that farms were too small to sustain families, precise data is scarce. This study examines Tomaj in the Karst plateau in 1822, using three types of sources: the Franciscan cadastre, which detailed farm sizes and land types; the *Status animarum*, categorising household members by age and gender; and an 18th-century servitude contract, defining nutritional needs. By reconstructing farms and families, estimating yields, and assessing nutritional sufficiency, the research reveals the extent to which Tomaj farms were self-sustaining.

Alessio Fornasin, Rural Family, Farming, and Livestock Breeding in the Alps (Italy 1930–1931)

This paper investigates the characteristics of the Italian family in the context of Fascist Italy, with particular reference to the Alpine territory. The perspective chosen is to consider the family in its relations with the size of the farm and with the availability of livestock, the latter aspect being particularly relevant to a mountain economy. The sources used include the 1931 Population Census and the 1930 Agricultural Census, which provide information on the characteristics of agricultural families, on farms, distinguished by size and by forms of management, and on the consistency of the livestock. As a result, in the Alps, the quantity of livestock was strongly related to the size of the family that owned it.

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Markéta Skořepová, Foundlings and Foster Children in Rural Families in 19th-Century Bohemia (Českomoravská vrchovina, Novohradské Hory, Šumava)

The study looks at the issue of foundlings brought up in rural families in Bohemia, Czech Republic. In the late 18th century, a system of foundling hospitals was established to reduce infanticide. Infants were subsequently placed in the care of rural families, especially in poorer, often mountainous regions, where fostering became a popular source of income. Our analysis focuses on several parishes located in Šumava, Novohradské hory, and Českomoravská vrchovina. Historical sources show regional differences in the number of foundlings, shaped by the local economy, transport, and social networks. Attention is paid to the living conditions and social position of abandoned children entrusted to foster families.

Giulio Ongaro, Luca Mocarelli, Managing Family Assets of Merchant-Entrepreneurs in Alpine and Prealpine Region in the Early Modern Age (16th–18th Century)

The paper analyses the management of family assets and businesses owned by urban and rural families in the Alpine and pre-Alpine territories of the Republic of Venice. Specifically, it will show how the management of various fields of investment was divided among the members of the entrepreneurial families. Besides, it will show the reasons behind the coexistence of diverse economic activities (from agriculture, to manufacturing and to the credit sector), and their evolution over time. Besides the traditional interpretation – according to which investments were diversified to protect wealth during an economic crisis – the paper will point out that economic (but also matrimonial) strategies of urban and rural households stemmed from a stratification of economic activi-

ties, adjusted for the specificities of each context, and designed to consolidate and increase family profits.

Margareth Lanzinger, Alpine Entrepreneurs

Innkeeper Families in Eighteenth-Century South Tyrol

Innkeepers are tradespeople who have been largely neglected in the social and economic history of the early modern period. This is all the more surprising as they often belonged to the local elite, held public offices and positions, and were also economically active in various fields. The article searches for clues, focusing on the connection between innkeeping and transport activities on the one hand, and the respective marital and familial contexts on the other. The cases outlined from the market town of Innichen/San Candido show that innkeeping offered opportunities for social advancement and that the wealth of women was very significant. It also becomes clear that the choice of partner seems to follow the pattern of marriage between equals.

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Siglinde Clementi, Strategies for 'Staying on Top'. Marriage Connections in the Tyrolean Nobility of the Early Modern Age: Circles, Patterns, Practices

The article is based on the assumption that noble kinship associations were part of a more or less permeable network of individuals and families of their rank (and acted within it), which enabled them to «stay on top». In these networks, marriages were a highly regulated rite of passage that resulted in the formation of new family units and thus created new social relationships, while at the same time potentially upsetting the delicate balance between families and houses. Against this background of sensitive balance and conflict-prone precariousness, the article analyses marriage circles, marriage patterns and marriage practices in the Tyrolean nobility in the 16th and the 17th century, with the border situation of the territory between German and Italian Lands (with two different *Heiratsgabensysteme*, or marriage gifts systems) posing a particular challenge.

Tanja Gomiršek, Inheritance Practices and Marriage Contracts in the Gorica Hills in the First Half of the 19th Century

Given the small size of farms, the population in the Gorica Hills in the first half of the 19th century abided by the indivisibility of farms to keep the farm-land in the family. While universal heirs had access to real estate, the remaining children received their shares of inheritance, which burdened the inher-

itance of the universal heir. The small number of surviving children granted the remaining descendants the possibility of marrying into other households. Marriage did not justify any claims to the deceased spouse's inheritance, since priority was given to descendants and relatives. The succession strategies in the Gorica Hills indicate that the inhabitants of the area studied acted rationally and did not subordinate their decisions to legally prescribed norms or to chance.

Nina Ošep, Marriage and Inheritance Strategies in the Upper Savinja Valley in the 19th Century

Based on the marriage contracts in the 19th-century Alpine villages of Luče/Leutsch and Solčava/Sulzbach in Styria, this article explores asset management and inheritance patterns. Adopting Margaretha Lanzinger's methodological approaches, we analyse marriage resource transfers, the modes of managing and distributing property between spouses, and inheritance procedures following the death of one or both partners. Furthermore, the study examines how demographic factors – such as age, economic status, and internal migration, shaped by the remoteness and limited accessibility of these mountainous villages – influenced the structure and content of marriage contracts. The empirical component is grounded in the analysis of contracts recorded at the Gornji Grad district court and the office of the Seigneur of Oberburg, preserved in the Historical Archives of Celje. These are complemented by other records such as birth, marriage, and death registers. The research seeks to enhance our understanding of marital inheritance strategies and family dynamics in the high-mountain Alpine environment.

Stefania Bianchi, Mark Bertogliati, The Pyramid of Powers. Emerging Families and Metamorphoses of Mobility of a (quasi-)Alpine Community, Sagno (17th–19th Century)

The paper focuses on the community of Sagno in Italian-speaking Switzerland. In the 18th century, its population comprised 27 households, including three dominant families around which other families gravitated, converging in their hemisphere through marriage or business alliances. Thus, in the modern age, Chiesa, Fontana, and Spinelli, like many other compatriots united in the same stonemasons' guild, operated mostly in Bologna. This partnership grew weaker in the latter half of the 18th century, as a result of the shift in work opportunities. In the 19th century, the Chiesa family remain close to the building sector and its related activities, mostly in Lombardy, while Fontana and Spinelli, continuing the tradition of 'barometti' (modest vendors of barometers

and scientific instruments from the Lake Como region), became successful in France in the field of optical instruments.

Andrea Pojer, Families on Horseback. Social Solidarity and Family Networks Underpinning Packhorse Trade through the Dolomites (17th Century)

This article examines the families involved in the packhorse trade through the Dolomite valleys in the 17th century. The first part highlights the social and family bonds between individual traders and key local authority figures, emphasising how this solidarity was essential for the success of trade and the management of entrepreneurial risks. These risks, particularly the burden of debt, were often shouldered entirely by the family, as there were no professional corporations. The second part discusses the social and economic impact of the packhorse trade on family dynamics and inheritance structures.

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Alessandro Ratti, The Recruitment of Fraternities: Families, Hamlets, and Formation Mechanisms of Devout Communities in Ticino (Late 17th–Early 19th Century)

The recruitment dynamics of devotional fraternities may be seen as a tool to interpret and understand their structure and functioning, thereby leading to develop a tool for a bottom-up modelling of memberships rooted in family or neighbourhood-based logics. In particular, the highly committed members are concentrated primarily around the officers' chapter. These devotees are defined by a series of socio-religious characteristics and boast networks of solidarity, such as kinship and neighbourhood. The community thus formed requires a strategic effort aimed at ensuring its own transmission through specific mechanisms.



