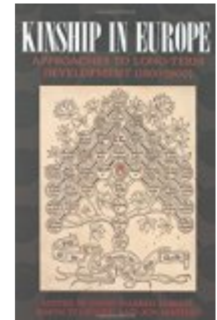
David W. Sabean, Simon Teuscher, Jon Mathieu, eds. *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to Long-term Development (1300-1900).* Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007. 350 pp. $90.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-84545-288-9.



Reviewed by Jason Tebbe

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Over the years, historians of early modern Europe have produced an especially rich historiography of the family. *Kinship in Europe*, edited by David Warren Sabean, Simon Teuscher, and Jon Mathieu, carries on this tradition with a volume of collected essays that focuses on constructions of kinship. Overall, the contributing scholars manage to make a convincing case for the significance of kinship as a category of analysis, while challenging older models for understanding the relationship between family and modernity.

According to Teuscher and Sabean's introduction, the diverse array of scholarship on display in their volume supports two larger arguments. The first, and most important, is that kinship's importance does not simply fade away in the transition to modernity. In making this claim the editors dispute the long-held assumption that the rise of state power from the late medieval period onwards inevitably forced a decline in the importance of kin relationships. Second, Teuscher and Sabean contend that two clear shifts in kinship practices in Europe are visible during the period between 1300 and 1900. In the late Middle Ages, kinship became patrilinear, and primogeniture the new norm. This system replaced bilateral inheritance and reflected a desire by noble families to build family fortunes by marrying outside and then transmitting them intact to a single heir. Around the mid 1700s this "vertical" organization was replaced by a "horizontal" one that stressed alliances, marriages within kinship groups, and less structured relationships, like god-parentage. The following chapter, by Sylvia Yanagisako, seems disconnected from the rest of the book, but nevertheless offers a compelling take on anthropological theories of kinship. She argues that too often, theorists rigidly separate society into autonomous cultural domains instead of looking across their boundaries. To rectify this problem, she calls on scholars to transcend these limits and examine the ways in which religion, kinship, economics, and nationality are linked, rather than separated. Historians as well as anthropologists could profit by heeding this plea.

The material after the two theoretical chapters is divided into two parts based on the aforementioned shifts in the late medieval period and the mid eighteenth century. All of the essays in the first part support the assertion that the late Middle Ages produced a more hierarchical and patrilinear model of kinship. They cover a remarkable breadth of locations, including Germany, France, Italy, and Switzerland, but for the most part touch only on noble and royal families. There are too many essays to be enumerated in detail here, but for the most part they conform to the general arguments made by Teuscher and Sabean in the introduction. For instance, Karl-Heinz Spiess shows that state centralization did not reduce the power of kinship in Germany, as ruling families there turned to primogeniture not to strengthen the state, but to build up their own dynasties. Bernard Derouet makes a similar argument for early modern southern France. Simon Teuscher's essay on Bern stresses the connections between urban government and kinship, and shows how groups in Bern's city council organized themselves through kin relationships. As Michaela Hohkamp and Giulia Calvi point out, kinship systems carry with them considerable implications for gender relations. Both scholars show how women could carve out power even within the seemingly more patriarchal system of primogeniture. Hohkamp argues that patrilinear descent limited political flexibility, and in response the father-son nexus was supplemented by an aunt-niece relationship. In her article on the wills of heads of households in Tuscany, Calvi claims that though women were excluded from inheritance, they gained "ethical empowerment" and moral authority.

The second part of *Kinship in Europe* contains six essays on the change towards a more "horizontal" kinship organization during the eighteenth century. The essays in this section also tend to look beyond nobility and focus instead on the bourgeoisie. In the introduction to the second part, the editors make the bold claim that the persistence of kinship into the nineteenth century belies any easy division between "tradition" and "modernity." To support this argument, the contributors point to places where kinship maintained its importance, or even gained greater salience. For instance, Laurence Fontaine argues that kinship played a crucial role in migration during the nineteenth century, and that the maintenance of kinship ties meant that mobility did not necessarily entail destabilization. In a similar vein, Christopher Johnson's study of civil society in Vannes shows how political associations and kin groups were interconnected.

The essays also highlight a trend towards endogamous (marriage within families by cousins) during the nineteenth century. For example, Jon Mathieu points out that Switzerland's short-lived Helvetic Republic, established in 1798, changed the law to allow for cousin marriages, which became more common in the nineteenth century. In his essay on the Hungarian middle class, Gabor Gyani notes that endogamous marriage strategies helped families preserve their fortunes. Echoing Gyani as well as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes* (1987), Elizabeth Joris argues that kinship networks were essential to the rise of the bourgeoisie. Similarly to Hohkamp and Calvi, she notes that the importance of kin for bourgeois well-being provided a field where women could exercise power.

Editor David Sabean ends *Kinship in Europe* with the volume's highlight, an essay that tightly links class formation and kinship. To illustrate his arguments, he brings in a rich array of cultural sources, such as novels by Anthony Trollope and Theodor Fontane, as well as letters and reminiscences from nineteenth-century families. Sabean finds that kinship relationships structured bourgeois sociability, and argues that endogamous marriages strengthened family alliances. Although the volume as a whole forcefully asserts the continued importance of kinship, Sabean feels that kin networks "sloped off" (p. 312) after around 1920.

On the whole, the general arguments made here for the continued importance of kinship in modernity, as well as the two major changes in kinship organization, are convincing. ***Kinship in Europe*** is also to be commended for its impressive array of subjects and the admirably diverse nature of its contributors. Above all, it manages to complicate traditional narratives of modernity, and provides a less simplistic, linear model of development. That being said, it has the usual issues of inconsistency that plague collections of this type, but is nonetheless more cohesive than most collected volumes. ***Kinship in Europe*** will be of particular interest to students of European social history and especially to historians of the family.

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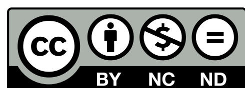

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