examples of “small” victories by labour and explaining how they counted at the time and how they should be counted now makes up for dozens of minor errors. This is a good and useful book and it deserves a wide readership.

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Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux and Emiko Ochiai offer a comprehensive synthesis on inheritance practices in non-egalitarian societies in Europe and Asia where the stem family system shaped practices, strategies, and behaviours. This publication is drawn from discussions during the conferences organized within the Eurasian Project on Population and Family History where contributors concluded that family studies in Europe and Asia could not be completed without comparing families’ life-cycle evolution and without using different sources and methods such as censuses, family reconstitutions, macro-structural and micro-longitudinal methods, household typology, network typology, and co-residence analysis. These approaches and methods allow researchers to consider time, family, demographic, individual and structural constraints and to discern gender-differentiated patterns and behaviours. The originality of the volume derives first from the authors’ demonstration that there were similarities, as well as differences, in family systems both in Europe and Asia, as well as within Europe and within Asia. Second and most importantly, they show that the house system and the stem family form in particular did not systematically exclude female headship and heirship either in Europe or in Asia, and that women played a greater role than the existing historical literature has acknowledged.

In the extensive historiographical, methodological, and bibliographical introduction, the co-editors explain the state of current research on household structures in Europe and Asia and the evolution of the debate on the importance of the stem family system since the 1960s. The other contributors show that the stem family system in regions of Europe and Asia where the house system was and is sometimes prevalent today has conditioned household structures and inheritance practices over time, imposing the co-residence of aging parents and their single heir, his or her spouse, and their unmarried siblings and children: a three-generational cohabitation with only one married couple and unmarried siblings at each generation. These practices clearly shaped families’ and individuals’ histories, yet they did not exclude women.

Eight specialists on the European family also participate in the discussion. Richard Wall argues that Le Play’s categorization is original because it helps to understand family practices regarding the choice of the heir, marriage strategies, inheritance practices, retirement and the destinies of non-inheriting children.
Le Play’s writings call for a redefinition of household typology, which, for Richard Wall, should be more adapted to modern technology and sources. Jürgen Schlumbohn argues that there was no cause-effect relationship between stem family household structures and single inheritance practices, stem-family forms being adopted by landed as well as landless families at different times and for different reasons in Germany. Josef Ehmer clearly indicates that emotional ties in Austria prevailed over material ties and therefore the “stem family” values did not apply to the Austrian family. Jim Brown reached a similar conclusion in his study of Lower Austria. Sølvi Sogner, for her part, argues that the concept of “stem family” in Norway does not apply despite families’ recent attempt to establish nobility lineages. In Finland, by contrast, Beatrice Moring explains, stem-family forms have prevailed over time, with landed families advocating for single male inheritance, generally through the first-born son (male primogeniture leading to the proletarianization of the excluded children), while landless families favoured nuclear family forms. In northern countries, families have showed a great capacity for adaptation through decisions over the selection of the single heir depending on conditions such as individual character (compatibility for cohabitation), demography (family size and marriage age), and new economic realities (professional urban or industrial opportunities). For Picardy-Wallonia, Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux argues that the stem-family system evolved in a similar way as in the Pyrenees in the nineteenth century, with a more traditional stem-family household form which required male or female single inheritance, early parental retirement at times, the compensation of the excluded siblings, and the heir’s cohabitation with parents and unmarried siblings. In Eastern Europe, the situation was quite different according to Karl Kaser. Apart from Romania where both the stem family and the nuclear household systems prevailed, the rest of Eastern Europe favoured the joint household form where sons shared heirship and headship. To conclude on the European family, authors agree that more research needs to be completed to understand the specific mechanisms and processes of household formation and inheritance practices, and inquire on the ways in which families managed to implement unequal inheritance practices despite equal partition imposed by the Civil Code.

Similarly, the second part of the publication highlights the evolution of the debate over the stem family system in Asia. Most of the articles are about Japan and there are not enough on the rest of Asia where research is still burgeoning. Two articles are on the Ie system in Japan — one by Chiyo Yonemura and Mary Louise Nagata and the other by Emiko Ochiai. Three other articles analyze the Japanese stem family system and its life course evolution, one presented by Satomi Kurosu, another by Hideki Nakazato, and the last one by Mary Louise Nagata. Outside Japan, household and family studies are scarce. The volume presents only five studies on other Asian countries: two on Korea by Hanhee Hahm and Paik Sungjong; one on Vietnam by Khuat Thu Hong, one on Thailand by Bhashorn Limanonda, and finally one on China by Michel Cartier.
The contributors came to the conclusion that, due to a paucity of scholarly literature on the family outside Japan, it is difficult to map Asian family systems and analyze their processes and evolution. In addition studies are complex because of the diversity of regional, demographic, family, and cultural priorities, conditions, and practices. On the contrary, in Japan where family studies are advanced, research has clearly determined the diversity of family systems. Some regions have favoured mostly large-sized stem families as in northern Japan or large-sized extended families as in southwestern Japan while others have primarily been composed of small-sized nuclear families as in central Japan. Hence, historians have identified three different Japanese household forms with practices of early or late marriage, families encouraging temporary domestic service for non-heirs, and even for heirs in some cases. Stem-family and single inheritance practices in Japan have aimed at preventing property partition with the goal to secure the full transmission of the family assets (rural and urban) to one child from one generation to the next. The single child was generally the first-born son, but daughters were not excluded. Heiresses thus brought sons in the house, later to become “adopted sons.” In the other Asian countries, family studies as a recent field of research needs additional analysis to contribute to the mapping of family systems in Asia and globally.

This comprehensive contribution proposes a valuable synthesis on the current debates around the stem family. Yet further analysis needs to be undertaken to better justify regional diversity over time, to map European and Asian family forms and practices, and to propose a global, comparative approach in the study of the family systems and processes.

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Jay Gitlin’s The Bourgeois Frontier is a remarkable book that combines commercial history and genealogy to create an incredibly detailed yet easily digestible narrative that seeks to insert the story of the French — or more specifically French merchants — into the American grand narrative. Through an exploration of the French experience in the early American Midwest, Gitlin effectively shows that French merchants were no bit players in the expansion of the American empire, but rather helped “broker the transition to an American regime of settlement (p. 187).” These French merchants engaged in diverse activities as Indian agents, founders of towns, fur traders, land speculators, financiers and early industrialists. Gitlin’s ability to connect the dots between French towns and French merchant families leaves us with a web of commercial and kinship connections in what he identifies as the Creole Corridor from Detroit to New Orleans. Moreover, he impressively places these merchants and their families in a broader context and