

Summaries of articles

Rome and the alleged gold drain : mercantilism or a policy of discipline ?

Paul VEYNE

Marx is right to disagree with Ricardo : the quantitative theory does not apply to metal money. If Roman gold and silver had escaped from Rome to India, as has been affirmed, this would have been critical ; even more critical than Mickwitz claimed in a 1934 article for Annales ; the consequence, moreover, would not have been the collapse of exchange, but a slow recession in demand. Only the gold drain did not exist, for Pliny most certainly mentions the 100 million in importations but omits Roman exportations to India. This omission would seem incredible if it had been the result of oversight rather than ideology : Pliny dreamed of autocracy, for him any expenditure, any importation was excessive. This autocracy was a political utopia and not an economic mercantile system : a politically sound state curbs its artificial needs. This utopia has scarcely been put into practice, and it discloses, above all, the incapacity within ancient thought to accept economics.

Afterlife in Western belief (c. 1250-1300)

Hugues NEVEUX

Did the death anxiety which was so much alive during the 15th century originate in the plagues that struck Europe between 1350 and 1450 ? This does not seem likely. In Montaillou, a Pyrenean village studied by E. Le Roy Ladurie, the peasants feared a peregrination that would lead to a demon-torturer ; they aspired to a salvation identified with rest and sleep. The « Golden-Legend » written around 1270, confirms the combination : suffering inflicted by devils and rest-sleep. But it also provides for the direct assumption into heaven concurrently with « dormition ». Above all it rejects wandering in favor of places of suffering. This was all part of the Church's effort to enclose the souls of the dead in well-defined zones : paradise, hell and, at the end of the 12th century, purgatory (the purgatory of Saint Patrick). This endeavor was based on popular tradition, mainly Celtic, and probably came from the desire to eliminate the other tradition, that of wandering which came out of Montaillou. Whatever the case may be, the death anxiety born out of fear of being punished in the afterworld goes back well before the 15th century ; the hecatomb at the end of the Middle Ages merely revived a fear that had already existed before this time.

Written discourse, spoken discourse the cultural levels in Byzantium (8th-11th centuries)

Evelyne PATLAGEAN

The period from the 8th through the 11th century is central in the interaction of social organization, political system and cultural production in Byzantium. Relevant issues are language levels in Greek and the rhetorical inheritance, the political functions of learned

genres, such as historiography or even law, and the formation of the Akritas epos. The author points out directions for future research in Byzantine material of that time, such as written vs. oral address (speeches in various circumstances, liturgy, reading out, singing out), production and circulation of books, and a cultural reassessment of the aristocracy, which means reaching beyond the splendour of imperial power, and also questioning the current approach to "popular" culture.

**Merchant capitalism and the merchant class
in Venice during the Renaissance**

Jean-Claude HOCQUET

The evolution of freight fees for Mediterranean salt in Venice between the 13th and 16th centuries reveals the following paradox : this freight was extremely costly beginning in 1350, while the historiography, for more than half a century, stresses the serious slump existing throughout all of Europe with regard to over-all prices and the marasmus of economic activity during the 14th and 15th centuries. Why, then, in this period of depression did Venice stand out as an island of prosperity at the height of its power ? The patrician State and the patrician merchant tried to set up an extensive commercial operation : in order to lower shipping costs on luxury commodities and their cost, they had the salt that was used to ballast the ship, bear part of the freight cost ; to find outlets for this salt imported from all the Mediterranean shores frequented in the trade of precious products, they proceeded with the quasi-systematic destruction of saltworks on the Adriatic Sea and made a common product scarce, thereby, putting it into the same category with rare products of great market value. The salt monopoly, which is a consumer sales monopoly, was set up as a means of managing the commercial policy that guaranteed the maintenance of revenues for the ship-owner and merchant classes. However, the salt trade had no margin for autonomous action at its disposal and it fell into ruin at the end of the 16th century when the major sea routes by-passed Venice for Atlantic seaports. In search of more profitable investments, the State favoured the development of nearby saltworks within their coastal territories, just as the upper classes put their capital into agricultural development.

**The "crisis of feudalism" and price movements
in the late Middle Ages**

John DAY

In a critique of the neo-Marxist model of late medieval economic developments proposed by Guy Bois in his study of Normandy in the 14th-16th centuries, it is argued that price movements were determined by climatic, demographic and monetary factors : short-term fluctuations reflected, as a rule, monetary "mutations" and the state of the harvests ; the rise in wage rates was primarily a response to the labor shortage and not the result of a hypothetical increase in productivity ; finally, the long price deflation of the late Middle Ages was due to a severe contraction of bullion stocks rather than a century of farm surpluses.

**The sources of fiscal history in
the 17th century France**

James B. COLLINS

Contrary to the picture presented by J. R. Mallet (one accepted by most historians), direct taxation in Champagne (and France) doubled between 1625 and 1634. The Central

SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

Treasury budgets do not reflect this increase because almost all of it was paid to the officers. By 1634, the proposed levy for the liens of the officers (droits aliénés) represented a surtax of 88 % (14 million l.) on the regular direct taxes. In that year, the king abolished the droits and introduced intendants as regional overseers, thus transforming the manner in which France was governed. This dismantling of the fiscal system helped to create a socio-economic situation in which a general revolt was possible because it alienated large segments of the royal administration. The fiscal crisis of 1643-1648 merely brought things to a head and made evident the urgency of a solution to the problems created by the fiscal and administrative policy followed between 1616 and 1642. The king's reliance on the army and the intendants to govern and administer France meant that reform could only come from the center, so it is not surprising that the solution chosen in 1661 was a cameralist "police" state.

Divorce in France at the end of the 18th century : a contribution to urban sociology

Roderick G. PHILLIPS

Divorce in late eighteenth-century France had two characteristics : it was used predominantly by women rather than men, and rates were considerably higher in the cities than rural areas. This article examines the reason why urban women should have been more ready to use divorce, and suggests that demographic and economic changes had so modified the traditional family economy that the corporate economic character of the French family had been undermined. The city offered women facilities for work and accommodation outside the family context, which were not offered in rural areas. The use of divorce may be seen as part of a broad process of individualization in France in the later eighteenth century, in which material changes in family life were reflected in changed views as to the relationship between the individual and the family.

For a geography of judicial mentalities : the state of litigation in France during the 19th century

Bernard SCHNAPPER

Beginning with legal statistics, the author defines a "rate of secondary litigations" (number of trials per 1000 inhabitants to come to court) and "primary litigations" (cases coming before the justice of the peace). This has enabled him to trace the evolution of trials in France from 1831 to 1925. With the aid of a set of maps, he circumscribes the regions where the most cases were heard during the last century ; whence the sharp contrast that would later subside. By examining the possible causes of these contrasts, the author arrives at an element that is irreducible as far as present-day knowledge goes ; the judicial mentality has been forged on regional soil and history.