

Summaries of articles

Clientele and corruption in the service of the State : the sale of offices in the lower Roman Empire

P. VEYNE

In Fourth-century Rome, official posts were purchased from their holders. For officials, who were the equals of the curials and the "barons" (as the "simple soldiers" ought to be called), were landed rentiers, for whom administration was not a livelihood or a career but an additional dignity, or an occasional source of income or an insurance policy for the future.

These notables absented themselves from their charge at will. Far from being the canker that gnawed away at the State from within, clientelism was the State's normal manner of operation. Corruption was far more than a simple abuse : the 4th-century administration was an original historical formation. The system was nothing short of a racket, exploiting the taxpayer and feeding off itself at every level. Like the kings of France, the Roman emperors, lacking a navy, used pirates and called them corsairs. This racket was not in competition with the State : it was the State, as in certain Central American countries today.

Technological changes in agriculture in Flanders and Brabant (XIVth-XVth centuries)

M.-J. TITS-DIEUAIDE

While agricultural technology was essentially stagnant in most of Europe during the Late Middle Ages and Modern Times, agriculture methods in Flanders and Brabant underwent important changes. These improvements began toward the end of the XIIIth century and lead progressively to an increase in cereal production and to a great diversification of crops which become particularly noticeable in the first half of the XVth century.

The cultivation of legumes and the systematic and ingenious exploitation of all available ingredients to produce fertilizer (in particular straw, animal, human and other organic refuse) played an important role in this development. Also associated with these practices were the cultivation of fallow land, the introduction of new rotations (occasionally including temporary meadows) and new methods of cattle-breeding.

Several favourable circumstances made these changes possible : among the most important were the high population density of the region which was only lightly affected by the Black Death and the relative freedom the peasants enjoyed in adopting new techniques. It seems that they were bound neither by a strictly enforced three-fields system nor by a systematic three-year rotation.

Stability and perfection of an agricultural system : the castellany of Furnes

P. VANDEWALLE

This article is a study of agriculture in the Kasselrij Veurne (45 000 ha.) between 1550 and 1645. In 1550, there were about 24 000 people living in this area, i.e. 53 people per sq. km, the actual number of people being strongly influenced by political events. The land was

farmed in units averaging between 10 and 25 ha in the polders and between 5 and 15 ha in sand-loam soil areas. The greater part of the land (63%) belonged to the farmer class. From a technical point of view, the farming methods employed were very modern, with few fallow periods and with no rigid crop-rotation system. There was also extensive cattle-breeding, both for dairy-production (2 800-3 400 litres of milk per cow per year) and for meat-production. Agricultural output was very high in the second half of the 16th century (between 29 and 43%) and during the first half part of the 17th century (between 7 and 28%). Looked at in a medium and a long-range perspective, agriculture in this region developed slowly without undergoing any crucial change.

**Woodcutting rights in the 18th century :
integration and exclusion in Ancien Régime communities**

A. CORVOL

A positive revolution in the conception of human settlement occurred in the 1660s. Until that time, the forest had permitted development of an extensive settlement pattern. The August 1669 Water and Forest Ordinance turned this into a specifically-delimited area of land managed rationally for the sole purpose of producing trees. There was no longer any room for man in this area now that it had been turned over to professional management. From the 18th century onwards, the forest environment was perceived as repellent to man. A century later, it was the turn of livestock to be driven out. The forest was now empty.

The violence of village communities was thus increasingly turned against the Water and Forest Authority, simultaneously responsible for the tying-down of human settlement, the break-up of ancient solidarities and for the dwindling supply of wood.

Family conflicts and residence groups in Haute-Provence

A. COLLOMP

In my study of an Ancien Régime village community, I demonstrated the existence of a family model (a complex residence group based on a family-stock type strategy for the establishment of children, singling out one of the sons as their parents). I described the successful, perhaps over-successful, working of a societal model dominated by the authority of the father. In this study of family conflicts, my first aim, following on from my earlier research, was to verify whether this family model dominated by the father corresponded merely to an ideal rule or to a practical norm and widespread custom; at the same time, I wanted to investigate the realities of family life from other sources and other points of view. In particular, I wanted to find out how members of the household adjusted themselves to the authority of the father, parents or relatives.

A study of the facts shows that it was the father's presence or absence (death) which permitted a bipartition of the classification of family conflicts. Preservation of the balance of power demanded the authority conferred by age and the hierarchic dependence of the younger generation upon the elder.

**Imports of metal currency into China :
essay on Chinese economics**

M. CARTIER

The dissymetry of Sino-European trade in the 17th and 18th centuries is familiar to historians, who generally interpret this as resulting from the impact of a dynamic economy (Europe) on a static world (China). Analysis of the monetary mechanisms prevalent in

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China suggest an alternative interpretation. China's conversion to silver in the course of the 15th and 16th centuries led to the institution of a silver/bronze sapek bimetallism which obliged the authorities to intervene constantly to maintain the internal exchange rate. China was to a large extent dependent on external trade for its metal currency supplies, and followed a mercantilist policy in fact if not in name. Examination of price-series points to a combination of measures designed to stimulate production, or the import, alternately of silver and copper in response to the international economic situation, in which 17th century Japanese growth may well have played a key role, hitherto underestimated by Western historiography.

Abstract of Birth spacing and family limitation : a critique of the Dupâquier-Lachiver technique

J. KNODEL

In an influential article published in Annales just over a decade ago, Dupâquier and Lachiver proposed a technique for detecting birth control based on family reconstitution data. Their measure focusses on 'intervals' and was seen as an alternative to the measures proposed by Henry which focus on 'stopping' behaviour. The Dupâquier-Lachiver approach suffers from the main problems. It confounds the effects of birth spacing patterns with attempts to terminate childbearing and it is sensitive to the underlying level of marital fertility thus being incapable of distinguishing deliberate attempts at birth control from non-volitional factors which contribute to the determination of the overall fertility level. These problems are demonstrated with data from several German village populations.

From error to technical illusion

J. DUPÂQUIER and M. LACHIVER

Having tested the indicators proposed by J. Knodel for French parishes in the 18th century, J. Dupâquier and M. Lachiver conclude that it is vain to suggest that there could be any indicators by which to measure voluntary birth control.

The age of menarche in France, 1750-1950

E. SHORTER

The age at first menstruation (age at menarche) declined in France from 15.9 years in 1750-1799, to 15.5 in 1800-1849, 15.1 in 1850-1899, reaching finally 13.9 in 1900-1950. This decrease of two full years across two centuries probably occurred as a result of improvements in the health of the female population, rather than as a result of a greater proportion of the female population living in cities. There is in fact no big difference between the age of puberty in big cities and small towns. Menarcheal age in Paris declines rather late. The most interesting difference this study uncovers is between social classes : towards mid-nineteenth century, young women from middle-class families reached menarche about half a year earlier than women from working-class families, which suggests how important diet was. We may be able to use data on age at menarche as a guide to changes over time in the standard of living in different social classes and in different provinces. For the years before 1850 the paper relies heavily on local doctors' estimates of the mean age at menarche, published in "medical topographies". After 1850 systematic interview surveys done in clinical settings became increasingly available.