

## Summaries of articles

### **Matrimonial Practice and Philosophical Representation: the Decline of Strategic Weddings?**

M. BENABOU

*It has often been claimed that there is a close link between two phenomena which seem to characterize Early Roman Empire society: (1) the decline in the then current practice of so-called strategic marriages (for primarily political and economic ends) when compared with more personal ones; (2) the birth and rapid development, reflected by a number of moralists and philosophers (especially those who directly or indirectly drew their inspiration from the Stoics), of a new representation of the conjugal tie. A brief historical analysis permits us to severely qualify this claim, bringing to light far more complex links between the two phenomena, in which philosophical polemic (especially anti-Epicurean) played a non-negligable role.*

### **Family Behavior in the Roman Aristocracy (200 BC to 300 AD)**

M. CORBIER

*This article first recalls the problems posed by terminological ambiguity and the fact that families of the Roman aristocracy studied by historians have been artifactually reconstructed by prosopologists according to literary sources for the Republic and epigraphic sources for the Empire. We then consider the specific answers provided by Roman society to problems crucial for any study of aristocratic strategies: demographic behavior (celibacy, marriage, fertility, birth rate, etc.), the choice of spouses (in marriage and kinship), and practices related to succession and inheritance. We compare their behavior with that of aristocracies from other eras and social contexts who had similar goals: the biological continuation of their families, the transmission and increase of patrimonies, and the diversification and extension of symbolic capital. Despite the Roman aristocracy's flexibility regarding adoption and divorce, it seems to have suffered from similar difficulties and failings as later ones. These difficulties indicate the coexistence of thoroughly contradictory ideals and practices which proscribe our viewing their behavior as uniform; rather it continually changed over time and space, as a function above all of transformations in political leadership.*

***Ethics and Statistics***

F. JACQUES

*A new theory has recently been proposed to explain the rather rapid turnover in the Early Roman Empire senate, sustaining that the majority of senators' sons chose not to pursue political careers. But the arguments usually put forward (e.g. involving demographic factors, or the perils and risks of political life) could suffice here. In particular, senators' sons had to compete with new men who were the Emperor's protégés in the race for the consulate and in order to become part of the Senatorial elite; nothing contradicts the notion that some of them may have simply accepted less illustrious positions out of necessity. Aside from the absence of supporting documentation, the main hurdle for this theory comes from the system of family values which pressured the inheritor to maintain the luster of the family name and, when possible, to increase it.*

***The masha'a and Land Question in Palestine, 1858-1948***

S. ATRAN

*This article examines the demise of the masha'a system in Palestine. Masha'a, which prevailed in the plains of the Levant through the early twentieth century, was a communal tenure characterized by periodic distribution of agricultural plots among peasant cultivators. The usual claim that masha'a was inimical to economic planning and social management proves unwarranted. Masha'a was neither "feudally" imposed by the Ottoman Empire nor did it constitute a holdover from a nomadic regime of communal pasturage. There is an analysis of the agricultural routines and social organizations of two villages with masha'a lands in the Plain of Esdaelon. The village with a stronger social fabric was largely able to resist outside intervention and land expropriation. Nevertheless, British Land Settlement, Zionist colonization and the political and economic disarray of Arab notables did conspire to alienate the majority of masha'a lands in the country's relatively fertile plains, thus prompting the revolt of the Arab peasantry.*

***What exactly did Britain's Aristocracy Contribute to Agricultural Progress from 1688 to 1789?***

P. K. O'BRIEN

*Historians seem to be in broad agreement that, in their capacity as owners and managers of a very considerable and probably increasing share of their country's cultivable land, Britain's aristocracy made a far greater contribution to agricultural progress over the 18th century than the aristocracies of continental Europe. This bibliographical survey of recent research in British agrarian history suggests that agricultural growth from 1688 to 1789 had only limited connexions with the steps taken by the larger aristocratic landowners to enclose their estates, to consolidate land into larger farms, to diffuse better techniques of cultivation—by shortening leases and inserting covenants of an improving kind into the contracts their stewards made with farmers for the use of land. Furthermore, the proportions of their rents reinvested in agriculture were on the available evidence pretty paltry. Basically what the aristocracy did, with style, was to make agriculture fashionable and to preside over the work foresight and innovations of Britain's farmers and smaller gentry.*

***Tithes, Wheat Output, and the Agricultural Revolution in Northern France during the Middle Ages***

A. DERVILLE

*The study of tithe leases in the main approach used in France in examining agricultural production in the Middle Ages. Collectors' accounts allow us to estimate that farm rents represented 50% of the gross product (including 35% of the costs and 15% of the profits). On the basis of these figures, we were able to estimate some local outputs. Our results agree with already established figures: in 1300, in the areas around Saint-Omer, Béthune, Lille and Douai, about 30 hectolitres of wheat were obtained per hectare, a consequence of high Flemish demand and the use of rivers which were already canalized for transportation purposes at that early date. Demographic recession led to decreasing outputs and, above all, to a slow reconversion that gave rise, little by little, to so-called Flemish farming techniques; these latter did not bring about a revolution, but rather slow and steady progress.*

***The Reformed Population of France from 1600 to 1685***

Ph. BENEDICT

*Census or parish register information regarding 92 Reformed congregations is used to estimate and account for changes in the size of France's Huguenot minority between the Edict of Nantes and its Revocation. The findings suggest a gradual though irregular decline in the ranks of the community, with significant urban-rural and regional variations. The causes of the decline appear to have been multiple, including high urban mortality rates, demographic stagnation in certain regions of Protestant strength and wartime losses incurred during the revolts of the 1620s as well as conversions to Catholicism.*

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