

Summaries of articles

Religion and politics : how gladiatorial fighting came to an end

Georges VILLE

The history of gladiatorial fighting is the history of the conflict between the taste for blood and a highly historical and political yearning for civil peace. The Christians themselves condemned combats between gladiators more as an impure spectacle (on a par with the obscenities of the stage) than as a repulsive institution : they were thinking more of the spectators than of the gladiators. The true cause of the suppression of gladiatorial combats is to be sought in the transformation of imperial power in the course of the 3rd century : a paternal king took the place of the civic magistrate.

Cinema and history : the three messages of "The Jew Süß"

François GARÇON

What form did Nazi antisemitism take in the early 1940s as evidenced in the film "The Jew Süß", which Goebbels supervised throughout its production, and which was seen by 20,000,000 people ?

The words put into the mouths of the Jewish characters, as well as their physical appearance, manner and language, are all the product of systematic antisemitism. Paradoxically, though, this does not build up to an incitement to the audience to go out and murder the Jews themselves, but rather to a justification of the elimination of the Jewish elites by the State exclusively. Analysis of antisemitism leads in addition to the discovery of a methodical antifeminism, as well-argued and cogent as the foregoing. Beneath these attacks, overt or otherwise, one can distinguish in this film a call for the domestication of Aryan youth and its authors' genuine horror of the masses when these intervene directly in the course of history.

It is these obsessions and phobias, as revealed both by examination of the way in which 18th century historical facts were adapted and by analysis of specifically cinematographic factors such as montage, the scale of views, the duration of sequences or dialogues, which make "The Jew Süß" a document of interest for what it teaches us of official ideology and Nazi sensibility.

From integration to exclusion : the place of the Jews in the mediaeval solemn entrance ceremonies

Noël COULET

The Jews originally formed an integral part of the ordered array of the urban community drawn up to welcome the king when the latter came to visit his people. In the High Middle Ages, the Jews occupied a place of their own and, by their liturgical acclamations and the parading of the scrolls of the Law, contributed to the collective praises addressed to the

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prince. From the 12th century onwards, however, the place assigned to them in the ceremonial route tended to set them ostensibly apart. The presentation of the scrolls of the Law came to be accompanied by a whole ritual : a speech on the blindness of Israel was added, later to be accompanied by gestures of contempt. Derision even paved the way for aggression.

Jacqueries in 'croquant' country.

The peasant revolts in Aquitaine, december 1789-march 1790

Jean BOUTIER

A series of peasant revolts broke out in Aquitaine—the region of peasant uprisings par excellence—in the winter of 1789-1790. But these revolts were vastly different from those of earlier centuries. Collective violence within the rural community was directed against the lord and against rentiers, whatever the source of their rents. To avoid minimizing the complexity of the scenario of the revolt, it needs to be studied in such a way as to shed light on the interaction, within the dynamic of violence, between not only social and economic but also political and cultural factors : the crisis in the State apparatus, rural sociability, the relationship between written and oral culture in the Occitan-speaking regions, etc. The specific character of the northern Occitan countryside, where the rent strategies of landowners, ignorant of the agricultural capitalism of the more developed areas of France, clashed with the precariousness of a society of smallholders and tenant farmers, demands that we take a fresh look at the heterogeneity of the peasant movement in the French Revolution seen in the context of uneven development within the nation as a whole.

"Honour" : a society of challenges in the 19th century

Élisabeth CLAVERIE

This article takes the form of a study of challenges to honour practised in the ostal society in the 19th century Gevaudan on the occasion of social competition in connection with marriage. The analysis is based on neighbourhood accounts consigned to the legal archives in the course of investigations conducted by the gendarmerie.

In preparation for future alliance, and with a view to maximizing their chances of success, the ostals launch a series of challenges to rival houses by casting public aspersions, by means of appropriate gestures and acts, on their reputation and on their ability to preserve their "property", while at the same time taking self-defensive measures to protect the secrecy of their own private life and practicing ostentatious intimidation. This system is evidence of the vital importance of alliance as a mean of reproducing a system of values which in turn serves to guarantee social conformity, since non-conformist behaviour may be used against an adversary in order to dishonour him : conformity being strictly required of everyone.

Matrimonial strategies in a complex

kinship system : Ribennes en Gévaudan (1650-1830)

Pierre LAMAISSON

Analysis of matrimonial strategies in societies governed by complex kinship structures (in this case, the Gevaudan in the 17th and 18th centuries) calls for a particular type of material, which in turn needs to be dealt with by data processing techniques. In the case of a society in which the prime unit is the ostal, i.e. the symbolic and material unit consisting

of land and house, and in which each generation transmits the entire "property" to a single descendant, the choice of spouse is narrowly bound up with the way in which this estate is transmitted and with the situation of each individual of marriageable age, with regard to the estate (heir or endowed). By superimposing registry records onto estate agreements contained in marriage contracts, and by then coding these data, it is possible, after automatically reconstituting genealogies, to detect patterns in the choice of spouse : for instance, cycles have been noted in the exchange of dowries between estate stocks, and these therefore occupy a position of pre-eminent importance, a position comparable to that of patrilineal or matrilineal descent elsewhere.

**Soviet society and state apparatus, 1936-1938 :
contradictions and interferences**

Gábor Tamás RITTERSPORN

The purges of the 1930's were initially aimed at imposing uniform rules of conduct on the cadres of the Soviet state apparatus, who frequently resorted to economically inefficient and politically dangerous methods of management. Nevertheless, they made use of their prerogatives in order to subvert these campaigns, to divert them by finding scapegoats and by purging advocates of strict political control, plunging the country into virtual civil war. This state of affairs had to be stopped in 1938, not only in order to save the apparatus from total breakdown, but also because of the growing unruliness of the masses. The purges did not succeed in curbing non-accountable methods of management, although they did result in a radical renewal of the leading personnel. These methods proved inseparable from the system and impossible to fight without destroying the apparatus. The cadres' interest in maintaining the unity of the apparatus prevented them from putting down these methods, whilst the masses were rendered powerless to organize and to bring about changes.