

English summaries

The Ancient Economy and the Greek City: A Model in Question

R. DESCAT

The publication 20 years ago of The Ancient Economy by M.I. Finley brought an end to a great extent to the century-old debate between modernists and primitivists. The question which we must henceforth pose is whether the Finleyan model is, given the state of present research, still completely adapted to the economic life of the Greek cities. The link between agriculture and the market, the place of the State, the role of currency should be reconsidered in the case of the Athenian type economies. We must underline in particular that the behavior of Greek man with respect to the economy is the result of transformations and new occurrences in the economic life. One must therefore try to separate an analysis of the Greek economy from an exclusive comparison with modern times in order to establish the basis for a veritable economic history.

Monsoons and Money: Commercial Routes between India and the Greco-Roman World

A. TCHERNIA

The rise of exchange between India and the Greco-Roman world is not due to a "discovery" of the monsoon; the utilisation of new maritime routes depended upon historic circumstances which, in the second century B.C. enabled Westerners to understand that by following the parallels one reached the Gulf of Cambay by way of Southern Arabia and Lymiriké by way of the Gulf of Aden. This realization is indicative of a first Hellenistic stage in the development of exchanges. Another accompanied the conquest of Egypt and the economic wealth of Rome which ensued. A third stage toward the changing era is marked by the direct appearance of Italian merchants in the Indian Ocean and the use of denarii as a means of exchange. Can one then speak of a monetary haemorrhage? The Roman authorities most certainly found it a source of preoccupation or indignation in the 1st century B.C. and financial investment in trade with the Orient was important. But the distribution of Roman currency does not concern the whole India. We have only a vague idea of the fluctuations which the system of exchange underwent and have little reason to believe that the same utilisation continued over several centuries.

The Social Condition of Private Freedmen in the 1st century A.D.

A. ŁOŚ

Under the High Roman Empire in Italy what place did freedmen occupy, and in particular, the elite freedmen with respect to the hierarchy of "ingénus" (free-born citizens)? This question has given rise to several models of which those of P. Veyne and G. Alföldi. Literary texts provide an indication of everyday life. Funeral inscrip-

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tions attest that in the 1st century A.D. mixed marriages between freedmen and "ingénus" were not uncommon. On the tablets found at Pompei, the order of witnesses' names enables us to study precisely the prestige of certain freedmen and the limits of this prestige. After the 2nd century A.D. this prestige as well as the influence of the freedmen most certainly declined.

The Currency Crisis in the Roman Empire in the 3rd Century A.D.: A Summary of Research and New Findings

D. HOLLARD

This study aims to synthesize recent research on currency in the Roman Empire during the 3rd century A.D. This period, a turning point between the classical world and late Antiquity, was marked by important social, economic and cultural changes of which currency is an excellent example. The collapse of the old trimetallic monetary system inherited from Augustus, the quasi-disappearance of monied silver metal and the primacy accorded to gold are so many facts which, added to the effects of inflation and the successive monetary reforms decided upon by the emperors, precipitated the socio-economic mutations. It seems that the monetary phenomena were a major vehicle for the transfer of wealth and facilitated the constitution of an ever-more inegalitarian society.

Landmarks in a History of Iconoclasm in the Middle Ages

G.P. MARCHAL

It is a fact that in the Middle Ages — long before the Reformation — devote Christians again and again intentionally made violent attacks on sacred images without any religious or theological argumentation about image-worship. In order to understand this process one must be aware of the medieval conviction of the saint being materially present in the visual representation: the saint was individualized and localized in each representation of worship. Therefore only that specific object of worship was meant to be attacked not the sacred in general. Such actions have to be seen as extreme varieties in the bandwidth of different religious practices. Very different reasons made people act in such a way, but their behaviour may be understood as coherent through processual symbolic analysis focusing on the dynamic of the different meanings latent in the icons as symbols.

The Double Decomposed: Meetings between the Living and the Dead at the end of the Middle Ages

C. KIENING

Since the "autumn" of the Middle Ages, representations of dead bodies — corpses and skeletons rising from their tombs, haunting, warning or attacking the living, thus becoming personifications of Death — are an integral part of occidental imagination. They can represent fears as well as hopes, clerical control mechanisms as well as laic emancipation fantasies. Although widespread in the age of the great epidemics, their polymorphology and multifunctionalism make them resist one-dimensional social or cultural interpretations. The essay attempts to demonstrate the subtle implications of the phenomenon up to the age of Holbein and Bruegel by means of iconographical models, in which the exciting confrontation of the living and the dead is particularly pronounced, in which forms of symmetry, asymmetry or distortion reveal experimental configurations revolving round the paradox how consciousness might think the unthinkable.