

Summaries of articles

Rembrandt: A Master in the Studio

S. ALPERS

How are we to explain the effect of singularity and individuality given off by a painting such as Rembrandt's Jewish Bride? It has become the custom to begin with a meditation on the meaning of the picture. But let us consider instead how the picture might have been made in such a way as to raise the question of meaning. I propose to see Rembrandt's works in terms of the circumstances of his own production or making of art. His life and the life of his art are largely a studio matter. Rembrandt represented life as if it were an event staged in his studio. The puzzling nature of the Jewish Bride is evidence of the professional basis and is the pictorial effect of Rembrandt's domination of the world brought into his studio.

Politics and Public Opinion under the Old Regime

K. M. BAKER

This article sketches the appearance, in the last decades of the Old Regime, of a politics of contestation which compelled its actors, whether they were engaged on behalf of the government or in opposition to it, to appeal beyond the traditional forms of absolutist politics to the tribunal of "the public". As a result, French politics seemed increasingly to resemble English politics, whose passions and disorders many Frenchmen viewed with corresponding unease. In this context, the idea of "public opinion" offered a new system of authority, the abstract source of legitimacy in a transformed political culture. As a political construct offering a middle term between the extremes of liberty and despotism, it presented the image of a politics of rational consensus in remarkable contrast not only to the traditional model of French absolutism, but to the politics of contestation that was threatening it.

The Nation's Tribunal: The Judiciary Memoires and Public Opinion at the End of the Ancient Regime

S. MAZA

This article explores the shaping and meaning of the notion of "public opinion" in pre-revolutionary France by examining the role of a specific category of pamphlet literature, the Judiciary Memoires. These Memoires were printed lawyers' briefs that appeared in connection with famous court cases; in the 1770's and 1780's they were immensely popular—in some cases tens of thousands of copies were printed. It is argued here that the popularity of the Memoires had partly to do with their unusual technical status, for they were uncensored, abundantly available, and sometimes

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handed out free. Still more important, however, were questions of authorship, style and content. The Memoires were written by parliamentary lawyers familiar with natural law theory and the language of political opposition, many of whom emerged as leaders in the revolutionary assemblies. A close thematic and stylistic analysis of these pamphlets shows the ways in which men of law educated their readers about political issues, using the Memoires to bridge the private and public spheres.

Some Elementary Forms of Religious Life in Rural France (Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries)

P. M. JONES

This article explores the process of community formation at village level during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary decades. Emphasis is placed upon the role of collective religious worship in promoting the sentiment of belonging, but it is suggested that the social discipline of church or chapel attendance meant more to peasants than religious dogmas or doctrines. The point is illustrated by examining in turn two little known and little understood facets of popular religious culture: lay worship and collective conversion. Lay worship developed during the Revolution, perhaps as a pragmatic solution to the scarcity of priests, but it persisted long after the shortage of clergy had been made good. The phenomenon of collective conversion appeared in the 1830s and 1840s when entire villages proceeded to switch their allegiance from catholicism to protestantism. The civil and ecclesiastical authorities detected a variety of motivations behind these sudden conversions. However, the author argues that the two phenomena are inter-related. They betray a desire to use and manipulate formal religion as a means of forging the social and cultural identity of the human group.

Women and Marriage in Toulouse at the Time of the Cathars

J. H. MUNDY

Owing to their relatively depressed position, women are often said to have been especially drawn to Catharism. Initial investigation of materials from the town of Toulouse seems not to support this view. Although Catharism gave women a somewhat greater religious role than did Catholicism, they were not placed as high as they were among the Waldensians, yet that belief had little place in the community. Furthermore women were not unusually discriminated against there, and hence had no more reason than the members of their sex elsewhere in Europe to favor divergent thought, yet Toulouse was a center of Catharism. These propositions and questions derive from an examination of the position of married women and the relation of persons of that sex to parental and marital property. Save for concubinage, the sexual relationships between men and women are not explored here.

Rural Italy during the Roman Period

J.-P. VALLAT

The study of rural Italy during the Roman period can no longer content itself with a never-ending analysis of literary sources given the multiplication of topographical studies, archeological digs, and regional monographs. The new material produced, however, springs from heteroclitic investigatory methods, and its interpretation is not free of subjectivity. Taking stock of this work concerning all of Italy leads one to wonder about the validity of the usually accepted "chronological breaks": The Punic

wars, the Greek period, and the end of the second century A.D., in particular. For the usual schema of modes of cultivation, production and property automatically following each other in time, we would substitute one of complex agrarian structures co-existing within the same geographical region—and even at the same point in time—with certain structures dominating others. We would in no way exclude serious divergences in regional economic development, as traces of pre-Roman substrata remain present during the Roman period.

***Ancient Rural Space in South-East France:
Archeological Ambitions and Realities***

J.-L. FICHES

In the field of Narbonnaise antiquity, archeologists, photo-interpreters, prospectors, and earth science specialists have recently been meeting to forge a common approach to Gallo-Roman rural space. This article reports on new practices, their first results, and the conditions allowing for their implementation, attesting that an archeology of rural space is possible. Reflection about this region has advanced because of increased knowledge of the Iron Age and notably of the oppida, the setting up of thematic programs concerning agricultural products (eg. wine and oil) and programmed digs, and renewed study of Roman cadastres. This reflection continues to develop within the framework of micro-regional studies; the first benefits, albeit partial, concern campaign organization in the Roman Empire and its origin in the dynamic of indigeneous societies, urban creations and the development of the forces of production. Our approach aims at grasping the interconnections between local forms and the processes which simultaneously renew and transform them, so as to understand the Roman system of cultivation not as a pre-established, uniform and fixed structure, but rather as a unifying movement.

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