

Summaries of articles

Abelard and the Builder of St.-Denis: Parallel Studies in the History of Disciplines

C. M. RADDING and W. W. CLARK

This article suggests that the history of philosophy and architecture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries can fruitfully be seen as a process of discipline formation. In each case, specialists moved from preserving specific skills or ancient learning to solving new problems or creating new artistic forms; they also devised the intellectual means of meeting this objective. Illustrating this point are the examples of Abelard and his contemporary, the master builder of Suger's St.-Denis, whose works are compared from the point of view of the cognitive processes by which they solved the technical problems of their respective disciplines.

Incest and Holiness: The Vie de saint Grégoire in French

A. GUERREAU-JALABERT

In the Vie de saint Grégoire, a text written in French dating back to the 12th century, a man born of an incestuous brother/sister relationship went on to marry his mother and eventually became a pope and a saint. The precise ordering of notations of spatial and social position allows one to bring to light the narrative's structure, seeming, in the end, to correspond to that of a clerical account of good social order—that social order which was contested by the knights because of its kinship organization and the social role it conferred on the clergy. This debate can only be understood, however, if one takes into account the major importance of symbolic and material spatial relations.

The Part of Privateering in Harbor Economy: The Case of Malta and Barbary Ports

M. FONTENAY

The 17th century was the Mediterranean's great privateering age: in addition to privateering warfare—periodically pitting the maritime powers of Western Europe against one another in its waters—there was the “Corso” to which Christians and Muslims gave themselves over permanently, of which the “Barbary Coast” and “Maltese” privateers were the best known protagonists. While this explosion of maritime violence may be considered as one of the factors leading to the decline of the Mediterranean in modern times, it can also be taken to have been, for certain Mediterranean peoples, a way of responding to the crisis. In this article we attempt to make an overall

estimate of the jobs created by the “corso”, both at sea and in related activities, and a rough estimate of the profits gleaned in Malta and certain Maghreb ports; this allows us to evaluate certain positive effects on local economies: the arrival of new men, demographic growth, increased sophistication of activities, dynamizing effect of spin-offs, acceleration of monetary circulation, a certain accumulation of capital—all of which was not, however, sufficient to ensure the autonomous development of a great harbor organization.

“Conversion” or “Repudiation”: Modalities of Christians’ Ambiguous Affiliation with Islam in the 16th and 17th Centuries

B. BENNASSAR

In the 16th and 17th centuries, tens of thousands of Europeans (and perhaps even more), converted to Islam after being captured on land or at sea, or because of a voluntary decision, in short, either willingly or under duress. They became what Christians called “renegades”. Extensive archival research on the Spanish, Portugese and Venitian Inquisitions (virtually exhaustive except in the case of Portugal), provided us with a sample of 1,534 individuals, the majority of whom were children or adolescents. “Repudiation” or “conversion” could be documented in 905, i.e. 59 % of the cases. This article analyzes the words and gestures which manifested Islamic affiliation, as seen in the confessions made to inquisitors by renegades returning from their stay in the Islamic world—whether willingly or under duress—after escaping or being captured by Christians, circumstances which require critical precautions. The richness of the documentation, however, allows one to decipher the meaning the renegades bestowed upon the words they pronounced, to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary conversion (as the ceremony was carried out in different ways in the different cases), and to pose but also resolve the following paradox: many of those who involuntarily repudiated Islam later became tried and true fervent Muslims, while many others voluntarily returned to the creed of their fathers at the risk of their lives.

Gifts, Impositions, and Exchanges: Of Several Seigniorial Taxes

M. GRINBERG

This study begins with the observation of the existence of ritualized micro-circuits of exchange (of goods, services, acts, and so on) within the framework of the seignioriy. These exchanges were recorded in the schedule of taxes, while at the same time constituting a particular type, and were expressions of a popular culture incorporated in the seignioriy’s hierarchical structure. The exchanges thus established oscillated between being gifts and being impositions; they reveal—within the seigniorial discourse which posits them—the whole complexity and ambiguity of relations between the Lords and the community. In the end, law entered the picture, via the Parliament which was called in at times to deal with these questions, leading gradually and empirically to a cultural break.

*The Dowry as Seen in Texts
and in the Workings of the Civil Code*

F. LAROCHE-GISSEROT

The dowry—which was shaped by, though it antedated, Roman Law, and was distinct from, and perhaps even in contradiction with, matrimonial compensations paid by the husband in other cultures (it was, however, momentarily supplanted by such compensations in the West)—has often been considered by jurists to be an instrument of succession strategy which worked to women’s disadvantage. But a dowry was also an instrument of matrimonial strategy benefitting the two families involved in any given marriage. The 19th century, with its Civil Code legislation, is a especially propitious period for studying the slippage which took place allowing one aspect to prevail over the other. During this same period, dowries became less and less frequent although the sums involved reached new highs.

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