

one hopes, growing obsolete. Vacalopoulos here relegates it to its proper place, admitting substantial Slavic infiltration but also insisting on the early cultural assimilation of many of the Slavs. He shows that in the last analysis Hellenism is almost the quintessence of a national consciousness: a Greek is whoever thinks of himself as a Greek. Two important requirements are that he speak Greek and (less essential after 1453) that he be an Orthodox Christian. For Vacalopoulos, the study of the origins of the Greek nation is primarily the study of the growth of an idea.

In this first volume of his work, Vacalopoulos traces the origins of a new, functional Hellenism to the traumatic experience of the Fourth Crusade and the conquest of Constantinople in 1204. Chapter 3, one of the best in the book, is full of insights about the cultural ferment at Nicaea that changed the pedantic Hellenism of the past into a live experience. The Byzantines began to use the term "Hellene" to refer to themselves, not simply to denote pagans.

The rest of the volume traces the development of the reconstituted Palaeologan Empire and the creation of the Ottoman state in Asia Minor and in Europe. The chapters on the Ottoman conquest of Asia Minor and the fall of Constantinople in 1453 are particularly illuminating in terms of the author's topic. Vacalopoulos sees what other historians are also beginning to see—that the last 250 years of the Byzantine Empire were not solely years of decline. Rather, out of the collapse of the state emerged a new society, marked by particularism in administration and by a Greek consciousness. The author discusses very ably both the material circumstances of the various parts of the old Byzantine Empire in this period and the growth of an idea. He integrates the two in a compelling manner.

The Byzantinists will not find in this volume a complete history of the years 1204–1461, but they will find a discussion focused on the growth of Hellenism and based on the discriminating use of an abundance of source material. The second volume is soon to be made available by the same publisher, and the entire work is a valuable contribution to the subject.

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DIE WIRTSCHAFTSGESCHICHTE DES MEMELGEBIETS. 2 vols. By *Gerhard Willoweit*. *Wissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte und Landeskunde Ost-Mitteleuropas*, no. 85. Marburg/Lahn: Johann Gottfried Herder-Institut, 1969. Vol. 1: pp. x, 1–429. Vol. 2: pp. 430–927. DM 38, paper.

The first volume of Willoweit's economic history of Memel comprises the period from the founding of a castle by the Teutonic Knights in the thirteenth century to the end of the First World War. The second volume contains the history from 1919 to 1945. Of almost a thousand pages, seven hundred are taken up by the descriptive part, almost two hundred are devoted to statistics going back as far as 1541 (though most of them deal with the twentieth century), and the rest contains an extensive bibliography and an index. The reader might wish for some additional, topically arranged tables of reference.

The whole represents a comprehensive survey in three parts. The first covers geography, prehistory, and the Middle Ages (up to 1525)—an unhappy story of a town founded by the Teutonic Knights' Order as a link between Prussia and Livonia,

with a history marked by recurring disasters through wars and fires. Economic progress was slow. The population remained small. Even after three hundred years of the town's existence, less than three hundred men capable of bearing arms lived there. In great detail, the author gives all possible information, describing the legal structure, the people's occupations, travel, trade, and living conditions (including such details as lists of available kettles and table cloths for kitchens, kegs of beer, cheese, and salt).

During the second period, from 1525 to 1918, the story indicates that the location of Memel off the main lines of communication caused slowness of economic development. Some economic spurts (for example, through the growth of a guild system in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), some help through privileges conferred upon the town by the rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia, some temporary advances in population (partly through immigration), in industry (mainly the lumber industry), and transportation facilities (canals and railroads) could not change Memel's backwardness in relation to competing Königsberg, Danzig, or Riga. Moreover, Poland's domination in Prussia proved unfortunate for Memel. Ironically, periods of war, such as those of the American Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Crimean War, generally helped the economic development of the area more than peace.

The third period, that of Lithuanian domination, was also disappointing. One might have expected that close political connections with a hinterland that lacked other harbors of its own would have led to a more prosperous age. But especially after Poland seized Vilna and deprived Lithuania of land and of connections with Russia, such an improvement did not materialize. Again the author deals with every aspect of the economy and gives needed statistics—down to minute details for populations, forests, fisheries, agriculture, husbandry, artisanship, amber production, industry, shipbuilding, trade, shipping, communications, and tariffs. He shows in what respect Lithuanian nationalistic aspirations, supported by the Versailles system and the French in the face of an overwhelmingly German population, added to the area's hardships. Then the depression added its share. Possibly the Soviets since 1945 have done more for Memel than preceding governments, giving it new life by developing industries and expanding the harbor as a submarine base.

The story is presented factually and with detachment. But there is little analysis or explanation; it reads more like an encyclopedic contribution in which data are enumerated. Issues such as whether diplomatic skill or a spirit of enterprise could have turned the given conditions into an asset are not taken up. The reader is struck by the provincial spirit that apparently prevailed in the area—and in the author's approach to its economic condition. Larger connections are seldom considered. Overseas relations with England were sometimes lively, but still weak—and so were even those with the closer countries Sweden and Russia. Willoweit's history therefore constitutes the history of a rather exceptional case, which seems to have no broad significance. This impression is emphasized by the sources used. Virtually all in German, they may be exhaustive as far as Memel proper is concerned, but the author himself deplors that even for the Lithuanian period he had no access to the Lithuanian material; and apparently he has made no attempt to supplement his information by a study of Swedish, Danish, English, or Dutch port books, or the account books of foreign trade partners, or the consular reports, and so forth. We thus have an excellent collection of data, information, and raw material for the economic history of the Memel area on the basis of Memel sources—and this

achievement should not be underestimated—but it still needs to be reworked into a searching history.

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SYSTÈMES AGRAIRES ET PROGRÈS AGRICOLE: L'ASSOLEMENT TRIENNAL EN RUSSIE AUX XVIII^e–XIX^e SIÈCLES. By *Michael Confino*. Preface by *Roger Portal*. Études sur l'histoire, l'économie et la sociologie des pays slaves, 14. Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1969. 495 pp. 51 Dutch guilders, paper.

There is little need to stress the interest of this study, which explores one of the key problems of tsarist Russia's agrarian and social history: the three-course (or "three-field") system of cultivation which formed, along with serfdom and the commune, one of the pillars of rural life. Well prepared by his previous researches and a deep knowledge of the peasant world, M. Confino has endeavored, as a faithful disciple of Marc Bloch (who is often cited), to approach his subject in its full scope. Agrarian history, even more in Russia than elsewhere, cannot be isolated from the history of the society—noble and serf—in which it was rooted.

The first part of the book gives M. Confino the opportunity to define the question critically and to assess the geographical extent of the three-course system, whose characteristics both agricultural (crops rotated, seasons of cultivation, farm implements, etc.) and social are carefully and pertinently described. The second part provides an analysis of what has been called the "crisis" of the three-course system and the remedies proposed, following Bolotov, by the agronomist-landlords whose attempts at modernization were to prove disappointing. The examination of the root causes of this failure is the aim of the book's last part—the newest—which seeks to evaluate the uniqueness, the resistance to change, and the durability of the three-course system in Russia. The author shows that it was a coherent and well-articulated system, the reform of which would have required a radical transformation of agrarian and social relations entangled with it.

Too brief, this conspectus could in no case bring out all the riches of this work, in which the detail is even more significant—if that is possible. M. Confino ignores received ideas and casts a fresh eye on questions often discussed and apparently settled—for example, the ill effects of the commune, the very notion of agrarian crisis, and still more the peasant "immobility" and "ignorance" (which might be only a defensive reaction to landlord pressures). Thus there is traced with a fine hand a portrait of the Russian peasant, whose age-old distrust of the lord and his innovations, too often designed to serve the lord's own interest, may almost suffice to furnish the key.

These many merits, indeed, are attended by certain weaknesses and imperfections in the organization and style, which occasionally weaken the force of the argument. Certain assertions would benefit by elucidation: for example, how does replacement of communal property by individual tenure require a surplus of land? Moreover, the role played by the growing needs and financial difficulties of the lords in their dissatisfaction with the three-course system and their twinges of conscience over the "crisis" deserves more than a passing reference (p. 153). Likewise, the fact that the commune was not in itself a conservative force is not enough to prove that it did not *in fact* exercise a paralyzing influence.