

Summaries of articles

Women's Power and Culture.

C. DAUPHIN, A. FARGE...

The history of women has been made to sway between various systems of exclusion, tolerance and, actually, one that renders things commonplace. By highlighting this course, the necessary connection between this field of study and the rest of historical research may be questioned in a new light.

The idea of a woman's culture sprang from the success of the history of culture and representations; women's exploits and experience are now studied in their own right. The efficacy of such a notion and the great amount of works based on it mask the deadlocks that arise when exploiting it. Reconstituting women's discourse and specific skills is not enough. It must be grasped how a woman's culture may be built up within a system of uneven, conflicting and contradictory relationships; the political side of the question should also be part of the reflexion on male-female, and the usual divisions between social power and political power ought to be reconsidered.

Friendship, Love and Spirituality in 18th Century New England: the Experience of Esther Burr and Sarah Prince.

L. BERGAMASCO

Minister's daughters form the intellectual elite amongst devout women in 18th century New England. In this article, the bond of friendship between Esther Edwards Burr and Sarah Prince Gill, daughters of eminent Protestant ministers, is analysed. Careful reading of their writings brings out the way in which their emotional life was directed and inspired by the Protestant religion. These two women were also drawn towards intellectual activity by their deep spirituality. Their quest which was spiritual, sentimental and intellectual, is summed up and exemplified in the friendship they cultivated and theorized upon fervently. By establishing such a bond of friendship, Esther Burr and Sarah Prince thus bear witness to the exceptional nature of their condition as well as to their commitment to the Protestant cause.

Man, Men and Women. A Study of the Vocabulary used in French Royal Biographies (11th-13th centuries).

E. CARPENTIER

This article has made use of the indexing and concordances obtained through the data-processing of a Latin corpus comprising several French Royal biographies: the Vie de Robert le Pieux by Helgaud de Fleury, the Vie de Louis VI le Gros by Suger, the Vie de Philippe Auguste by Rigord and Guillaume le Breton. This implies trying to understand, by studying the terms vir, homo and vocables designating women, their respective roles in the biographer's narrative. A careful analysis of the usage of different cases, singular and plural, qualificatives and context enables to oppose the vir, a highly valorized social type, to the mass of homines presented in an unfavourable light and to a few women, object of the dynastic strategy of family heads.

The Turning-Point in Barbarian Europe in the Second Half of the 7th Century and the Birth of Regionalisms.

M. ROUCHE

In 1948, Jan Dhondt had put forward the hypothesis that territorial principalities were the result of the crisis in the second half of the 9th century. But, a study of the Italian peninsula in the second half of the 7th century reveals the existence of at least four particularisms on Byzantine territory. At the same time, the Visigoths were not able to prevent the creation of three others on the Iberian peninsula. As for Merovingian Gaul, eleven local principalities were born. The reasons for such revolt were refusal of the Roman taxation system, the rise of noble families and the deflationary choker due to gold-currency entailing too high a purchasing power. The half-century between 650 and 700 is in fact the very point in which regional powers of a new society and economy, a token of feudal Europe, are born.

Northern Europe from the 7th-9th Centuries: Frisian Trade or Frankish-Frisian Trade?

S. LEBECQ

In this article, the author intends to make explicit some of the ideas put forward in his book: "Marchands et navigateurs frisons du Haut Moyen Age" (Lille, 1983). He wants to emphasize, in particular, the need for the "great Frisian trade" in the 7th-9th centuries not to be underrated, so long as, when evoking Friesland and the Frisians, one takes into account the reference in contemporary sources to a vast territory located between the Scheldt and the Weser; this includes the Rhine's great delta, dominated by Dorestad, whose population, at this point, was experiencing both the Frankish and Frisian apogee. Consequently, it appears that, while the Frisians were backing up this expansion in trade with their maritime experience and technique, which was unequalled to start with, the Franks doted it with a pacific and prosperous hinterland (at least as long as the apogee lasted), making efforts to integrate it within the framework of a genuine Northern policy, the aim of which was to penetrate the Northern countries whose threat was becoming more and more perceptible under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.

Aristocratic Example and Burial Practise in Merovingian Gaul.

B. K. YOUNG

Burial practises in Merovingian (or "Dark Age") Gaul, and in particular burials equipped with weapons, jewelry, ceramics, etc., have often been interpreted as Germanic traditions which betrayed the presence of the original invaders around 500 A.D., and subsequently reflected the resistance of their descendants to assimilation by the Gallo-Romans, thought to have long abandoned grave-goods in the face of Christian hostility. This ethno-religious viewpoint now appears outmoded as more precise and complete topochronological analyses of individual sites suggest that their origin and development reflect a variety of influences, with wealth and social prestige playing a dominant role. During the Sixth century Christianity became an influence too, whose impact on the leading classes is examined in this article.

History and Narrative Arabic Historical Writing.

A. AL-AZMEH

This article proceeds from the assumption that the world as expressed in historical writing obeys rules distinct from those that animate the world in its immediate empirical unfolding. It is argued that historical narrative has stronger affinities with mythological and other narratives than it has with the world as such. Medieval Arabic historical writing is then analyzed with the aim of showing how it is that narrative rules generate and structure specific profiles of events and of the concatenation of events. In this light, a study is made of the annalistic mode of historical narrative, which is considered here as the prototype of all chronological narrative. From this, conclusions are drawn pertaining to the relation between "real" causality and the causal modes prescribed by the narrative structure of chronological historical writing.

Urban Sharifism, Charisma and Historiography.

A. SEBTI

Genealogical literature (ansāb) is considered here to reflect a "written memory" of family charisma. Various strategies are interwoven into the text: acts of devotion in search of divine blessing and the Prophet's intercession, the State's concern to exert administrative control as the grantor of privileges, the will of the aristocracy to preserve its titles of nobility and to protect itself from any possible intrusion.

Muhammad al-Tālib Ibn al-Hājj (d. 1857) wrote "a general survey of the notable sharif-s residing in Fes". This text is first studied as being in line with the local genealogical tradition. Then, the author tries to define the terms of classification and genealogical authentication.

The itinerary followed by the text calls to mind the family tree pattern. The terms used to designate subdivisions and enumerations are heavy with symbols. Authentication is grounded on learned tradition, legal documents and supernatural signs (miracles, dreams). These different references are frequently interchanged.

Analysis of the social practices in connection with such a major notion as genealogy (nasab), enables a methodological perspective to be distinguished that allows the historical narrative's coherence to be detected; at the same time, a symbolic dimension may be integrated into the social history of pre-colonial Morocco.