

Summaries of articles

“Ancient History” and “History”

F. HARTOG

Producing a special issue on ancient history for a journal not devoted to the field is a particularly challenging task. We have chosen the theme of the historian's relation to documents, treating the topic from a critical standpoint with a view to leading the reader to reassess his relation to his own “archives”. This issue is devoted not only to ancient history, but to the historiography of antiquity, and in particular to the work of Louis Gernet, Sir Moses Finley, and Arnaldo Momigliano. But the ultimate questions raised in this issue are the place of ancient history in France as a discipline with respect to history in general and to the renewal of historical methods, and, in a broader perspective, the significance and impact of antiquity as a reference in a world where classical culture is on the wane.

Documentary Aspects of Ancient Economic History

M.I. FINLEY

There are no statistics in antiquity, and any attempt to reconstruct them is doomed to failure. Contrary to what is sometimes stated, our helplessness is not due to the fact that too many economic documents have been lost, but to the very nature of those documents. In this respect, the Middle Ages marked a decisive turning-point. Numerical data are collected and calculated in response to a society's specific needs; the examination of selected economic documents from antiquity reveals a painstaking attention to detail coupled with a surprising lack of comprehensive accounting. Such documents were a response to day-to-day needs; they fulfilled a “police function”, but were not intended to provide data for policy-making or economic forecasting. Whenever possible, the historian of antiquity should attempt to establish data series with a view to a quasi- or pseudo-statistical analysis.

Ancient Topography and Modern Ideology The Roman Forum Revisited

F. COARELLI

After some general remarks on the state of ancient history studies in Italy and the revival of public interest in archaeology, this article examines certain topographical questions concerning the Roman Forum that were regarded as having been solved by early 20th-century excavations and for which the author advances new solutions: the course of the via Sacra and via Nova and the location of the temple of Jupiter Stator, the Porta Mugonia, and the kings' residences.

Myths and Prehistory

J.-P. DEMOULE

This article discusses the relation between prehistorical research—since its inception—and a wide variety of myths: the biblical myth of Genesis, which did not have only negative effects, but also stimulated the search for traces of “antediluvian man”; national myths (from the French Revolution onward), some of which, like the Germanic or Indo-European myths, had a wide impact, while others, like the Gallic myth, were less successful; 19th-century “primitivist” myths, which, despite paleontological evidence, persisted in tracing the origins of man back to an elusive “ape-man”, who was said to have lived in mythical and uncomfortable settings such as caves, lake dwellings, and “hut floors”. But one must also include scientific or scientific myths that attribute to scientific observation an autonomy that—as we have just seen—it never possessed, even if the object of the prehistorian’s scientific study is becoming increasingly undifferentiated and de-territorialized. Finally, in the commonplace variety of prehistory offered by prehistorians for public consumption, one can detect the persistence of updated versions of the same myths.

**Archaeology and Academic Traditions
in Europe in the 18th and 19th Centuries**

A. SCHNAPP

The development of archaeology in Europe from its origins to the 18th and 19th centuries was strongly influenced by national traditions. By the 16th century, in Scandinavia, an interest in national antiquities led to the establishment of protection and research agencies and the enactment of archaeological legislation. But in Britain, Germany, France, and Italy, the “élites” were almost exclusively interested in the Graeco-Roman world. Archaeology thus came to be seen as the science of traveling and collection-gathering antiquarians. With the founding in Rome in 1828 of the Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica, archaeology acquired a scientific framework and laid claim to an academic status that it was soon granted in Germany. At the same time, yet quite independently, prehistorical finds led naturalists to use archaeology as a means of contributing to the “natural history of man”.

The humanist and naturalist traditions have been fighting ever since over a discipline whose boundaries are by nature imprecise. The difference between the French and German approach to the problem of interdisciplinary studies may explain the enduring crisis in French archaeology.

**Archaeological Surveys in Greece
and the Mediterranean Area**

A. M. SNODGRASS

It is assumed, by many archaeologists and by virtually all non-archaeologists, that excavation is the only form of primary fieldwork open to the subject; indeed, for many laymen, excavation is archaeology. It is argued in this paper, first, that some of the unsatisfactory character of archaeological evidence, when applied to other studies, in fact arises from its dependence on excavation; and secondly, that there is an alternative technique available, in the form of archaeological survey, which can complement excavation and which is free of some of its faults. The paper seeks to make a case for intensive survey as the optimal method, and describes the main characteristics of this method. The difficult problems of sampling are also discussed. Finally, the paper enumerates some of the criticisms most often made of intensive survey, and attempts to answer some of them while conceding the validity of others.

**Historians of the Achaemenid Empire
and the Bisitun Inscription**

C. HERRENSCHMIDT

This article concentrates on the first fourteen paragraphs of Darius' text. The analyses and interpretations of the text by M. Dandamayev (Persien unter der ersten Achämeniden), J. Wiesehofer (Die Aufstand Gaumatas und die Anfänge Dareios I), and H. Tadmor and E. Bickerman ("Darius I, Pseudo-Smerdis and the Magi") are summarized and critically examined here. The first two authors, guided by their theoretical choices, treated the text as a series of discrete units rather than a continuous whole and—unlike Tadmor and Bickerman—failed to take into account its literary features. In conclusion, the present author proposes a new reading of the first fourteen paragraphs of the Bisitun inscription. The text as a whole is interpreted as an assertion of legitimacy by the signatory king. Two basic lines of argument are used: the king belongs to the reigning family, and he took part in the royal enthronement rite. Each argument is illustrated and developed through a different literary form: the tale of the Magus Gaumata and the theoretical discussion by Persians about their own society.

Thasian Amphora Stamps: A Progress Report

Y. GARLAN

This article begins with a survey of results obtained by specialists in recent decades. Thanks to the discovery and partial excavation of amphora workshops, it has been established that the name on a Thasian ceramic stamp of the later variety (post-340 B.C.) designates the magistrate elected for the year, while the symbol is that assigned to the producer for the calendar year. Thus the stylistic analysis of the amphorae can be conducted on a more solid basis. It is now easier to understand why amphorae were stamped and in what socio-economic conditions they were manufactured. The stamps are neither advertisements nor indications of production levels; they testify instead to the importance of administrative controls.

**Cadastrés, Land Occupancy,
and the Ancient Countryside**

G. CHOUQUER, M. CLAVEL-LEVEQUE, F. FAVORY

Ancient geometrical land divisions are being identified in increasing numbers. Technological advances (coherent light filtering and automatically-drawn modular grids) and new methods (rigorous choice of criteria for orientation and modules) have improved our knowledge in this area. The results obtained in Italy and Gaul in particular reveal the great morphological diversity of land-division systems and the flexibility of their application. Because of its widespread success, the Roman centuriation into 20-actus units is the most striking system.

Each conquest and regional planning project featured specific modes of territorial organization and patterns of land occupancy. These modes and patterns reveal the adaptability and variety of cadastrés, which served as sophisticated and efficient instruments for organizing all the elements of a territory. As normative and restrictive frameworks for the local population, cadastral grids paved the way for systematic control of space and landscapes. They created tangible matrixes that had a deep influence on human behavior, left lasting imprints on the collective imagination, and are still embedded in the vestiges being analyzed today.

***Critique of a Systematization:
Plato's Laws and Reality***

P. VEYNE

Plato's Laws are not so much a utopia as a systematization aimed at forcing the Greeks to live in accordance with their ideology. Plato systematized three phenomena whose coexistence in Greece was purely coincidental: (1) The importance of festivals and contests: this role was determined by fashion, and it would be wrong to attribute it to the practical and affective significance assumed by these festivals after they were instituted. (2) The ideology of leisure: the rich were not supposed to work, or at least their activity did not qualify as "work". Such a life of leisure was the highest human ideal. This ideology was nothing other than an ideology of rationality suited to a patrimonial—and not an autarkic!—economy. (3) Lastly, Plato systematized the underlying presupposition in Graeco-Roman political thought, namely, the militancy of the citizen, who was regarded as an instrument of government rather than a subject. This notion—like liberty or human rights in our age—dominated political thought, at times even shaping policy; it gave such a distinct character to Greek "democracy" that the latter resembles in name only what moderns call democracy. Indeed, the political ethnology of antiquity is still an uncharted field. The principle of civic activism, which prompted the young Marx to assert that the State in antiquity was only political, accounts in particular for the theme of luxury as the factor that causes States to fall from greatness into decadence.

Interpreting the Bacchanalia

J.-M. PAILLER

The Bacchanalia affair (186 B.C.), cited from antiquity to modern times as an example of religious repression, is well known thanks to a long account by Livy corroborated by the epigraphic evidence of the senatus-consultum. The study of the legal aspects of the repression has revealed the significance of the episode in the Roman seizure of Italy. An analysis of the distortions in Livy's account leads to a systematic investigation into the mythical, ritual, and social elements concealed or revealed in the "romance". To appreciate the politico-religious nature of the affair, one must note the persistence of anti-Roman protest in Italy during the Punic wars, assess the role of Etruria, southern Italy (Capua, Taranto), and Egypt, and determine to what extent the "political" and "spiritual" interpretations are contradictory or complementary.

Connections are suggested here between the Bacchic cult, the cult of Ceres-Demeter at the turn of the century, and the Orphic-Pythagorean current in Italy (the "Numa's books" episode, 181 B.C.). An underground sanctuary at Bolsena (in Etruria), destroyed during the repression, contains a throne decorated with Bacchic motifs. This site casts new light on an officially recognized Dionysiac cult with Orphic and Pythagorean overtones—a cult that presents surprising analogies with the Roman mundus.

The Beginnings of Hellenism

L. GERNET

A study of the social prehistory of Greece can help to explain the origins of Greek civilization.

Legends constitute the documentary evidence that can make up for the shortage of conventional data.

The originality of Greece lies in its political life, and especially in the emergence of politics as the decisive factor in the secularization of society.

The rise of the city-state crystallized the various aspects of that revolution around a

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unifying element. Justice was only one manifestation of the triumphant new rationality, whose human character was linked to the life of the city-states, in which even physical reality was designed to embody the notion of balance.

***The Greeks without Miracle:
Louis Gernet's Historical Anthropology***

R. DI DONATO

A reconstruction of Louis Gernet's intellectual biography based on new documents provides a fuller understanding of his work and a background for the writings collected by J. P. Vernant and published in 1968 under the title Anthropologie de la Grèce antique.

Gernet, a Durkheimian sociologist, was influenced by Meillet and his semantic studies on Greek legal and moral philosophy. Gernet's approach became resolutely anthropological. Another shaping factor, apart from the role of Marcel Granet, was Gernet's connection with I. Meyerson, whose "historical psychology" is a combination of the French school of sociology and Seignobos's historicism.

It is these complex methodological influences that underlie Gernet's convincing interpretation of the period ranging from the dawn of history to the rise of the Greek city-state.

Finally, Gernet's intellectual activity went hand in hand with a consistent political and public commitment within the French left.

***Arnaldo Momigliano's Contributi:
Portrait of a Historian in His Settings***

E. PATLAGEAN

This study of A. Momigliano is based on the collected volumes of his Contributi. While Momigliano's work displays a continuity of trends and topics since the 1930s, it has also been constantly stimulated by major contemporary events, particularly the rise and fall of Nazism. Momigliano's long-standing concern with the historian's relation to his sources has led him to examine ancient historiography, modern scholarship, and historicism, and to discuss the role of antiquity as a basic reference in European culture, the contribution of ancient Jewish culture, and modern Jewish thought. Momigliano has been particularly interested in the Hellenistic age, the so-called decline of the Roman Empire, and the problems of early Rome; he has emphasized the need to broaden the very notion of antiquity beyond its current, conventional time and space limits.

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