

K. BRULAND AND P. O'BRIEN (eds), *From Family Firms to Corporate Capitalism. Essays in Business and Industrial History in Honour of Peter Mathias*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, pp. XXV-362.

The work of Peter Mathias, who is the subject of the twelve essays which make up this book, has been mainly concerned with addressing one of the basic issues of contemporary economic history: the economic development which took place in a large number of countries in Europe, North America and the Pacific from the last decades of the eighteenth century. Given the importance of the subject it is natural that Mathias has spent much of his academic career in analysing the process of general growth. But the English scholar has also contributed considerably to identifying the most appropriate research methodologies to explain the phenomenon. As Kristine Bruland points out in the introduction, to analyse and understand the process of economic growth we need, on the one hand, an empirical approach with the aim to identify the main issues and, on the other, an awareness of the long-term changes they imply. Mathias' work exemplifies both these approaches: he has explored an extraordinary range of empirical problems such as the history of specific industries, the general growth of industrial sectors, technological change and the role of scientific progress, retail trade and consumption, entrepreneurship, industrial finance, taxation, the international dissemination of technology, the birth of big industry, the organisation of work and leisure and other issues related to the major changes taking place from the end of the eighteenth century.

The scientific method used by Mathias to study economic and social history has been inherited by his alumni who have contributed to this work. In particular, great attention is paid to the intellectual problems posed by economic growth and change, both as regards questions that need to be answered and the methodology used to study them. Data on economic development reveal structural characteristics and complex trends which pose major problems of interpretation. According to Bruland, these characteristics include: 1) major institutional changes and changes in economic organisation; 2) technological innovation and change which continually modified products and processes with complex effects on industrial structures, both with regard to income and levels and the dislocation of production; 3) short and long-term cyclical fluctuations in growth and employment levels; 4) major structural changes that have reshaped economic systems since the beginning of the nineteenth century; 5) an extremely unequal process of industrialisation at a world level, measured in terms of income, technology and development capacity.

As is well known, there is no consensus among economic historians about the factors that generated growth, nor regarding a convincing explanation of the process that linked all the above-mentioned factors. On the contrary, as Bruland points out, we lack a full understanding of the link between changes in the size and complexity of industries, the nature of technological change and the transition

from the first to the second industrial revolution. According to Bruland, the difficulty partly lies in the very complexity of the process; on the other hand, there are also systematic reasons that explain our difficulty in arriving at a convincing interpretation of the process of economic development. These reasons, Bruland concludes, partly reflect the problematic relationship between the practice of economic history and the theoretical structure of traditional economic studies.

As we have already said, Mathias' interests are reflected in the contents of the book under review. All the essays deal with aspects of industrialisation and growth which are of general interest to historians and economists who have attempted to make theoretical generalisations based on a vast literature devoted to trade and industrial development. Most studies refer to the British case, but contributions on the American and Asiatic experience are also included. The book is divided into two parts: the first is concerned with industry and trade in the period of the first industrial revolution and the second with the age of capitalism and big industry. Some essays focus on the important question of industrial finance. Mathias has linked the persistence of family control over British businesses to institutional factors, especially to the problem of access to capital. The role of small manufacturers, family networks and threshold finance are also stressed by his alumni. Kenneth Morgan has examined the growth and decline of the Bristol sugar industry, revealing the social origins of the industry's entrepreneurs and emphasising the increasing financial demands that arose from the slow process of mechanisation and concentration. David Cannadine has looked at the entrepreneur-innovator Joseph Gillot, a manufacturer of nibs which was certainly not a spectacular sector but one which generated a wide demand. The essay shows that a number of forces acted on Gillot and he exemplifies Mathias' idea that entrepreneurs have to be studied in their social context if we wish to understand their behaviour. Marguerite Dupree has analysed the family and social context of pottery workers in Staffordshire around 1850, studying the interactions between their commercial strategies, the strategies of workers' families and the social and cultural environment in which they operated. Dupree argues that the influence of firms on the community was weaker in Staffordshire than in the cotton-manufacturing areas. Joyce Ellis has focused on the access to risk capital in the Tyneside coal industry in the eighteenth century. Fiona Wood has studied the links between coal, transport infrastructure and the trade and financial sector in East Anglia. This region recorded a lively growth in trade and consumption in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in a way that cannot be explained by theories that emphasise the predominant role of large-scale technological change. Lastly, Edmund Newell deals with the collusion between firms in the copper industry, a small but strategic sector. As is well known, collusive agreements - cartels and trusts of various kinds - are often considered as part of the transition towards the American and German form of capitalism based on big industrial concentrations. Newell shows that collusion varied in kind and produced different effects. The copper industry was an example of a regional agglomeration of firms,

highly concentrated in the Swansea area. The sector was characterised by a high level of formal and informal agreements about price-fixing, many of which lasted for decades, and by an oligopolistic structure. Nonetheless, none of these agreements led to mergers, the pooling of resources and large-scale trade; rather, collusion served to preserve the independence and autonomy of the firms operating in the sector and to make sure that the spread of intensive production methods did not render British manufacturing uncompetitive

The book does not neglect studies on the formation of managers, the general rise of big industry in Great Britain and the role of scientific progress in modern industry. Kristine Bruland has studied trade alliances and the role of new professional managers in the development of an important technology in the steam-boiler sector. Bruland stresses the relative independence of managers in the large firms that were emerging - in this case Singer - and the practical problems about control that this implied. Avner Offer has examined a key factor in the growth of mass production in America, that is the development of the car industry after the second world war and its unmatched models. In particular he considers the development of marketing systems and retroactive mechanisms between marketing and the development of the product. Heita Kawakatsu addresses one of the crucial issues in the debate about Great Britain's economic performance at the end of the nineteenth century, focusing on the textile industry and the response to the challenges posed by the global development of industry.

As is well known, the role of technological innovation in industrialisation has caused a wide debate among economic historians. Mathias has made an important contribution to our understanding of the processes involved in technological change. He was one of the first historians to bring out one of the key points in the matter, namely that in order to be successful from an economic point of view, technological innovations have to spread and develop through use. Changes in forms and processes from the first to the second industrial revolution are vital for explaining the process of technological change and in particular the relation between the changing organisation of firms and technological transformations. Maxine Berg has studied the development of new products in the eighteenth century. Like Offer in his essay on the American car industry, Berg stresses the importance of demand. She shows the development of a consumer culture in the course of the century, giving as an example the growth in the demand for metal buttons, buckles and candelabras. Competition and an increase in the sales of these products was based on the flexibility in the development of models and on the application of innovation.

As an economic historian, Mathias has never ignored the impact of politics on the economy. In this connection, the essay by Brian Harrison examines the complex relations between British governments and trade unions regarding the incomes policy after the second world war.

As we have already said, the book is entirely devoted to one of the fundamental issues in economic history, that is economic development and

industrialisation in the last two centuries. It is undeniable that the present state of research is still a long way from providing exhaustive explanations about this process. However, as the contributions which make up this book suggest, traditional economic theory has less to offer than rigorous empirical research into sectors such as company organisation, technological change, consumer patterns, politics, regional development and the social and cultural contexts of economic change.

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J. LANDERS, *Death and the Metropolis. Studies in the Demographic History of London, 1670-1830*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, XXIII+408 pp.

Death and mortality, the subject of John Landers' book, underpinned London's demographic structure in the eighteenth century, the period chosen by Landers for presenting an original theory about demography in pre-industrial towns, where mortality emerges as a primary factor for explaining changes in demographic structure.

Starting with the analysis of various schools of thought, from neo-classical theory to the theory of the *Annales* school, Landers shows that mortality was excluded from the structural analyses of demographic history since it was viewed essentially as an exogenous factor compared to other social, economic and demographic variables. Landers' theory pivots on the concept of mortality potential in a specific section of the population, which was determined by the number, characteristics and density of pathogenes in the atmosphere and by a population's level of resistance to infection. Such resistance was itself determined by nutrition levels, by the presence of a low level of immunity to pathogenes and by the sanitary conditions in which the population lived and which affected the ways in which infections spread. The actual mortality rate of a population was at the same time determined by its mortality potential; this was affected by social, economic and geographical conditions and immunity levels and by a factor unrelated to demography and economics involving the process of microbiological change which depended on biological factors.

The field of enquiry chosen by Landers to test his theory is the demographic growth of London which became the largest city in Europe in the eighteenth century. After rapid growth in the first decades of the century, there was a period of stagnation which lasted until the 1750s; thereafter the population began to rise up to the 1780s and again in the last decade. However, it was only in the last few years of the century that baptisms outnumbered deaths; throughout the century London was pervaded by a sense of death, since the number of deaths was greater than the number of births. This is borne out by the fact that London's

mortality rates were the highest in the kingdom. For most of the century, London's population growth depended on the continuous and very considerable immigration flow from the countryside. According to Landers, mortality underpinned the structure of London's demographic history of London and perhaps the demographic history of other large cities. For this reason it cannot be considered on the same footing as an earthquake, which was a dramatic but exceptional event, nor as a local epidemic.

Thus we need to consider all the factors that affected mortality potential and to understand the ways they interacted, bearing in mind the economic, social and political context. Through an extensive and objective quantitative analysis of specific sources, firstly the mortality bills and secondly the registers of burials and baptisms of the Quaker community, Landers presents a picture in which deaths were structurally more numerous than baptisms and in which growth stemmed from continuous migration. In particular, mortality struck children and poor immigrants, who lived in the working-class districts and were not immune to the city's endemic diseases (respiratory illnesses, typhus, smallpox etc.) which resulted in high adult mortality among this class as well. What emerges is the endemic nature of diseases which made the city a large and persistent centre of potential infection. These diseases were latent and awaited only the right conditions for them to spread rapidly, even as far as the countryside in view of the constant exchange of men and goods. Paradoxically because of the low level of immunity possessed by immigrants, this large migratory movement resulted in an increased mortality rate; the immigrants who were not immunised were most affected by the epidemics, especially by smallpox and tuberculosis.

Of course, the high mortality rates also had other causes. However according to Landers, these were not strictly related to nutrition levels. On the basis of very precise quantitative studies Landers shows that, although the mortality rate was sensitive to short-term trends in the prices of foodstuffs, such sensitivity was statistically weak and was not the main cause of short-term mortality in the capital. This is also confirmed when one considers the characteristics of the main epidemics responsible for mortality (smallpox and fevers), which were only loosely connected to nutritional factors.

Much more important in determining mortality rates were the changes in the levels of exposure to infection and in the level of immunological resistance which depended on the population density, on the quality of dwelling space and on the sanitary conditions in which the population in various districts of London lived.

In this connection Landers shows that mortality rates in London in the eighteenth century varied from district to district. As one might imagine, the districts with the highest mortality rates - even in normal years - were the working-class districts which had a low qualitative level of living space, where sewers and plumbing were very poor and frequently broke down causing pollution.

In these areas characterised by a high population density there was often a high number of immigrants who lived in precarious and overcrowded conditions which produced a high exposure level to disease.

Landers stresses the fact that the building sector for most of the eighteenth century was overshadowed by crisis. In London very few new houses were built and through a continuous subdivision existing houses became overcrowded, especially those in the poorer districts with a high immigration rate. All this naturally increased the level of possible exposure to contagion. The city's environment, particularly in the working-class districts, became progressively worse and it is in this global deterioration in the daily living conditions of the poorest section of the population that we should seek the root causes of the circumstances which produced such a high mortality rate in London for most of the century.

Thus Landers explains the decline in mortality in the 1780s by pointing to the improvement in living conditions in many districts as a result of the new phase of economic expansion based on credit and on finance which made it possible to carry out large-scale urban redevelopment and to build new districts, better housing and a more hygienic infrastructure. Alongside such developments, Landers also refers to the mass diffusion of cotton bedding which could be boiled and thus improved personal hygiene. The exposure to pathogenes decreased largely because of the improvement in living conditions and this brought about a decline in mortality which was mainly linked to the disappearance of typhus epidemics and to the spread of new and efficient medical treatment in the fight against smallpox (innoculation). As a result infant mortality fell considerably and births outnumbered deaths for the first time in the eighteenth century.

In addition, we should note the fall in migration to the capital and the increasing migration to other towns which, with industrialisation already underway, became new poles of attraction. This considerably reduced the high mortality rates connected to the arrival of hordes of badly-immunised persons and for this reason, too, mortality declined significantly. To sum up, we can quote Landers and say that the history of the decline in mortality in London is the history of the progressive decline in the levels of exposure to infection.

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J.I. MARTÍNEZ RUIZ, *Finanzas municipales y crédito público en la España moderna*. La hacienda de la ciudad de Sevilla (1528-1578), Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, Sevilla, 1992, pp. 395.

The search for means to satisfy the Spanish monarchy's financial needs, which grew enormously owing to its foreign policy, was carried on not only through tax policy with the consequent development of financial machinery,

but also through the subordination of local finance to the needs of the Monarchy's general policy. Indeed, one of the consequences of the growth of central government power - and by no means the least important consequence - was the subjugation of municipal institutions and the impossibility for them to carry on an autonomous financial policy which reflected the needs of local citizens. This is clearly illustrated by Martínez Ruiz in his case study on Seville which develops the doctoral thesis he submitted to the *Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales de la Universidad de Sevilla* and which succeeds in analysing very deeply the case study in hand whilst setting it in a much more general context through a well-informed discussion of the existing literature.

In the first three chapters which make up the first part of the book, Martínez provides us with a very detailed picture of the institutional aspects of the municipal hacienda in Seville, as well as the ordinary income and expenditure incurred in financing staff, satisfying the city's food requirements and the central government's fiscal demands.

By purchasing the city's public-debt securities, investors brought in the money needed to meet the commitments of the city authority. In the second half of the century the city authority financed the central government by purchasing *juros*, government stock. The revenue earned from *juros* was then used to pay the revenue paid out on securities issued by the city authority. Guaranteed by *juros* and by the yields from government securities, or by income deriving from the renting of municipal property, local taxes, and earnings from government taxes, Seville's city debt was for many years highly attractive and diverted capital away from more productive sectors.

In order for the system to operate smoothly, the city authority had to pay its creditors punctually but at the end of the sixteenth century this was no longer possible due to the stagnation of the Castilian economy. The effects of the economic slow-down were felt by the tax-payers who had to bear an increasing tax burden and by the Treasury and led to the suspension of payments in 1596, 1607 and 1627. The change in economic conditions also affected Seville, causing a reduction in the town's ordinary and extra revenues. The fall in income, together with the widespread embezzlement of public funds and the high level of indebtedness which stemmed from the need to finance the city's food requirement led to delays in and then the suspension of payments.

Measures were taken. A committee called the *Comisión del desempeno* -set up with the purpose of reforming city finances - began to tackle the debt problem by selling the most lucrative property owned by the city authority. This enabled it to reduce drastically the debt's capital in a short time, although price was the privatisation of city property which passed into the hands of the new and old city elites. Martínez stresses that in this case, as in the case of other measures adopted by the government to reform municipal finances, the result was always an increase in income for the Treasury and not for the needs of local government.

During the seventeenth century, the government increasingly sought extra

contributions. This was the case of benevolences (which are still used in the towns of Malaga, Valladolid and Madrid), although, as different methods were adopted by towns to meet the expenses they incurred, it is difficult to quantify and compare them with ordinary revenues and bank loans. From 1621 to 1627 Seville contributed around two million ducats to the government in the form of benevolences. It also participated in the major wars fought by Spain in the seventeenth century providing men and funds for the army and the purchase of artillery.

Benevolences and direct contributions to the war effort created serious problems for the city authority since city income fell in the course of the seventeenth century due to population decline, the reduction in the number of tax payers and in the number of villages administered by the city. In these circumstances, the authority had to resort once again to the sale of property, this time to an even greater extent, and to extra taxation. Benevolences were again guaranteed by the sale of city securities, which undermined the financial reform undertaken by the *Comisión del desempeño*. In this way the city authority became once more caught up in a process of indebtedness, after having barely recovered from its previous debts. But now the situation was much more serious, firstly because the city's economic circumstances had changed and secondly because benevolences did not imply any economic return for the city as had been the case with *juros*. The population had to endure, therefore, all manner of extra taxation which was used to pay the interest yielded by city securities and which completely changed the structure of the city's revenue.

In any case, Seville's financial problems continued to worsen during the eighteenth century, leaving the Bourbon governments with a heavy legacy. The advent of the new dynasty following the death of Charles II, according to the figures given by Martinez, only aggravated the situation, because the period of warfare that ensued involved the city - as Philip's ally - in considerable expenditure which was met once more by the sale of city stock. The deployment of most of the city's finances to service its debt and the great increase in local taxation caused the central government to intervene again by reducing the interest on stock to 3% annually and carrying out a strict control over city finances. A *Reglamentos de propios y arbitrios* was issued in 1768 with the aim of reducing local taxation in order to benefit central government taxation. As a result city finances were definitively subordinated to those of the central government.

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H. MEDICK, *Weben und berleben in Laichingen, 1650-1900*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1996, pp.708.

What remains of the postulates and of the basic theory regarding proto-industry, which has given rise to so much debate in the last few decades, starting

with Franklin Mendels' PhD-Dissertation (1970) and the other seminal work by Kriedte-Medick-Schlumbohm, *Industrialisierung vor Industrialisierung* (1977)? Perhaps less than these historians (the late-lamented Mendels is unfortunately not here to defend himself and respond) had argued in their greener years. Nonetheless the interest in field research has been considerable throughout Europe in this period and has produced important results as regards our knowledge of specific "proto-industrial" regions and areas, which often conflict with earlier assumptions. In fact we have to acknowledge that historical events did not always evolve in the way set out in the theory concerning the transition (or missing transition) from proto-industry to industry. In particular, the importance of demographic factors (the idea that proto-industry was accompanied by a big increase in population) has been contradicted by several studies. In some areas (Pays de Caux, in Normandy, but also in several Swiss cantons) a flourishing cottage industry co-existed with intensive farming and not necessarily with subsistence farming as the theory had suggested. In the end it seems that the concept contains not, as D. C. Coleman would argue, too much but too little to take account of the many variables that different historical situations have revealed. Indeed historians have raised the question as to whether we should definitively abandon the proto-industry model (Robert A. Butlin) or reformulate it by introducing other concepts (for example Gilbert Garrier and Ronald Hubscher's pluri-activity theory). The "drei Göttinger" have themselves realised that starting with the historical regions studied after the ground-breaking study of 1977 (Kriedte on the Krefeld region, Schlumbohm on the Osnabrück region - especially the parish of Belm -, and now Medick with the Württemberg and the village of Laichingen), not everything fits into the original theory. While in the case of Krefeld the role of urban industry (especially the silk industry) was just as important as that of rural industry, at Osnabrück and in the parish of Belm, population trends were complex and were not always in line with the growth of cottage industry. In the case of Medick's book - the crowning of a twenty-year long and extremely fruitful research - the complexity of the results is difficult to relate to the well-known characteristics of proto-industry. With regard to the demographic variable once more, in the case of the village of Laichingen we find that despite the growth of cottage industry the age at which people married did not fall. The rate of infant mortality remained high all the same, thereby nullifying the possible benefits deriving from such occupations and confuting any automatic link between cottage industry, the lowering of the marrying age and the birth rate.

But it must be said that all credit goes to Hans Medick who did not hesitate to counter his own ideas in his comments on the results of an extraordinarily large statistical survey comprising 86 tables and diagrams in the text and 33 in the Appendix, set out in over 700 pages, the fruit of an investment of considerable human resources and materials involving a large number of researchers and the creation of software called Kleio at the Max-Planck Institute of Göttingen. Thanks

to this work we now know nearly all the social, economic, political aspects of this small centre in the Württemberg that numbered 1000-2000 inhabitants, convinced as H. Medick is that the study of a small community enables us not only to link up with the major problems of history but also to see implications and issues that would otherwise remain unexplored.

It is obvious that we are referring explicitly to "micro-history". The risks inherent in such a method are nonetheless not unknown; while it is true that the *detailgeschichte des Ganzen* which Medick pursues with conviction is fascinating, it is also true that the risk of writing history based on every detail looms large. From the parish records and tax records covering the period 1658-1884 we now know everything about the age at which weavers, peasants and small holders married, about their spouses, their children, the latter's death rate, and the increase in their wealth. Certainly these analyses will have a heuristic and paradigmatic value and will constitute the basis for further research. On the other hand, we shall not blame future generations of researchers if they abstain from using these surveys which are analytical to the last detail.

By that we do not wish to say that Medick fails to see the wood for the trees and that he has allowed himself to be distracted by writing quantitative history for its own sake. On the contrary the value of this study lies in his treatment not only of economic and social variables but also of political and institutional aspects and of mentalities and cultural factors which enable us to fully examine the history of Laichingen within the context of a late absolutist state, the Württemberg. This was a principality (Fürstenstaat) which up to the very last of the *Schwabischen Zaren* (Frederick I, 1797-1816) - as Medick calls them so effectively - applied the principles of an increasingly inadequate mercantilist policy. It is in this context that we may understand the reluctance of the authorities to encourage the rise of a group of entrepreneurs (against the interests of privileged companies like the *Uracher Handelsgesellschaft*) who, according to one of the postulates of proto-industry, could have turned the manufacture of linen - which enjoyed very favourable conditions in this region - into a flourishing industry.

Equally convincing are the chapters dealing with the "culture of appearances", that is clothing (even buttons reflect social consciousness, an aspect first noticed by Lucien Febvre and which Medick takes up here) which was a way of showing one's social position and of distinguishing between the upper classes and the lower classes, the inhabitants of the village and the peasants. Another section deals with popular culture and religiosity, subjects addressed using the tools of *Alltagsgeschichte* (Alf Lüdtkke) and social anthropology. Going against a preconception of traditional historiography Medick underlines the high literacy rate of this Lutheran community from the early decades of the eighteenth century which was deeply influenced by the pietist movement (Hartmut Lehmann, Rudolf Vierhaus). The result was a very high circulation of books which enabled Laichingen to match the nearby university town of Tübingen in terms of books per inhabitant. From a survey of 1500

inventories for the period 1748-1820, 14,000 titles have been extrapolated of which only 1.5% were not of a religious content, compared to 22% in the town of Tübingen and 20% in Frankfurt. Once again a wide number of aspects are examined with all their implications: the social status of readers, their purchasing power, the contents of the works. These included weavers, wage labourers, peasants, food workers and those in other occupations; books of devotion, sermons, catechisms, bibles and various literary works often chosen for their symbolic and magical value rather than for their didactic content. The reference to Menocchio, Carlo Ginzburg's miller who was the product of a popular culture which developed in parallel to "high" culture, is quite natural. But alongside this approach, Medick has added an extraordinary amount of statistical and quantitative material (the excesses are probably due to the fact that he was writing a thesis to become qualified) and makes this book one of the best products of that much-debated genre, micro-history.

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R.C. MUELLER, *The Venetian Money Market. Banks, Panics and the Public Debt, 1200-1500*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1997, pp. XXVI-711.

Reinhold Mueller, American by birth and Venetian by adoption, had planned with the late Frederic Lane a comprehensive two-volume history of money, banking and finance at Venice in the Middle Ages. Volume I, chiefly concerned with money and minting, was published in 1984,¹ shortly before the master's death. The present volume is, as promised, a history of banking, the money market and the funded debt. Mueller's passion for his subject is sustained by the conviction that one of the keys to Venetian power and grandeur in the Middle Ages was the banking system, in the event, the private deposit banks and the money market, two distinct institutions whose respective roles he has studied over the intervening years with commendable perseverance.

Private banking developed in Venice from money-changing and not, as one might have expected, from money-lending or pawnbrokering. The banks, in fact, were not conceived initially as lending institutions but rather, as the name *banca da scritta* or giro bank suggests, as a convenient means of transferring funds from client to client or from bank to bank without the physical exchange of coins, which were clumsy to handle and difficult to evaluate. The transition seems to have occurred around the year 1300 when money changers began to accept deposits, effect transfers in their books and, inevitably, invest part of their reserves in trade or loans.

¹ Frederic C. Lane and Reinhold C. Mueller, *Money and Banking in Medieval and Renaissance Venice*. Vol. 1 - *Coins and Moneys of Account*, Baltimore and London, 1985.

In the absence of bank records or partnership contracts, Mueller has traced the evolution of the institution through the analysis of litigation, liquidations, legislative texts, biographical data on bankers and their families and rare descriptions, mostly by northerners who never ceased to marvel at the facilities afforded merchants by the "giro" banks (the Venetians had come to take them for granted).

Toward the end of the XIVth century the term banker ("bancherius") had replaced the term "campsor" or money changer, and the banks were fewer and bigger. They had also become more professional, or at least more respectable (most fifteenth century bankers were nobles). Banks accepted time deposits at interest and deposits in current account which gave rise to the creation of "bank money" (transferable bank credits). Merchants also had regular recourse to bankers for modest interest-free overdrafts. By the XVth century it has been estimated that as many as one Venetian in thirty (or one family head in ten) held a bank account, and almost all purchases of consequence by that time were effected in "bank money". Moreover, the banks were routinely called on in emergencies to open lines of credit for the government, which earned them the accolade "pillars of the state". Mueller evokes in this connection the progressive "monetization" of the floating debt. In fact, the state ended by creating more "credit" money in the form of bank loans than coined money at the mint.

All banking at Venice took place under the porticos of Piazza San Giacomo (or Piazza Rialto), today the wholesale vegetable market, on open benches with shops at the rear for housing strong boxes and the written records of operations (which had the force of law). Cheques were unknown, and indeed unnecessary in the small world of the Venetian business classes. The opening of a new bank was a major event on the Rialto, with the celebration of a solemn mass, the music of fifes and trumpets, the display of sacks of coins to reassure depositors with the history of bankruptcies still fresh in their minds.

The deposit banks, in fact, were fragile institutions. Despite the fact that banking business was one of the most regulated of the highly regulated Venetian economy, the vast majority of private banks eventually failed. Professor Mueller has composed a sort of typology of this long string of bankruptcies. The principal causes, often in combination, were untoward movements on the bullion market or, more simply, a sudden silver shortage and the liquidity crisis that ensued; excessive investment in the commodities trade; simple theft on the part of the banker which was normally settled by compromise in order to protect creditors from total loss. (Common bank robbers, on the other hand, were subject to horrible "exemplary punishment"). Whatever the investigation, in the end the "chain of indebtedness" resulted in a classic run on the banks. The danger was greatest in periods of intense commercial activity when the seasonal shortage of "danaro" (cash and credit) was exacerbated by political conflicts, for example with the emperor Sigismund in the early XVth century affecting the bullion trade, or on various occasions with Florence affecting

the foreign exchange market. Projects for a public clearing bank with 100 per cent reserve requirement resurfaced after every crisis, beginning in 1356, and were regularly voted down until the failure of last private bank in 1584 led to the creation of the famous Bank of the Piazza of the Rialto.

The foreign-exchange market, the favourite source of short-term commercial loans for half a millennium, was organized and run by Florentine merchant bankers who had elected to move their base of operations to Venice after the decline of the Champaign Fairs because Venice was “the most bullion hungry and credit hungry market in Europe” and because of the regularity (“seasonally” in Mueller’s words) of the demand for credit on the Rialto. The Florentines’ economic role was to oil the wheels of commerce by assuring the necessary liquidity to the market at times of peak activity, notably in the heart of summer when the galleys were preparing to sail for the Levant. The technical discussion of the Florentine credit network centred at Venice, including tables of seasonal fluctuations in exchange rates on different markets, is based in large measure on the Datini archives in Prato. It reveals, among other things, that the favourite destinations of popular six-months bills (three months each way in “dry exchange”) were London and Bruges, and confirms that the markets moved in unison. After 1460, however, Venice’s key role in the European money market was assumed by Lyons, and later by Genoa where the predictability of the exchange fairs supplanted the predictability of port movements. Venice was not a great innovator in the field of finance, unlike the merchant bankers, exchange dealers and international lenders of Florence and Genoa. Her much admired deposit banks remained local institutions in the service of the merchants, particularly those engaged in the Levant trade, and her money market for a century and a half was in foreign (i.e. Florentine) hands. (Fernand Braudel once attributed Venetian “conservatism” in this domain to her early advance on the road to capitalism which left her captive to solutions dictated by custom).

Two sections of the book are devoted to the institutional history of public borrowing in medieval Venice involving the Grain Office and the funded debt. Prior to the organization of the funded debt (the *Monte Vecchio*) in 1262 the Grain Office served as a sort of state bank that administered the floating debt, advanced funds to the government for the purchase of grain and the construction of “public works” like flour mills and kilns. It was much favoured by investors, especially by foreign princes and *condottieri* as a safe haven, a sort of “Swiss bank” for their private fortunes. It was succeeded in the course of the XIVth century by the *Monte Vecchio* as a long-term investment bank and by the private banks as a depository for government accounts.

The funded debt originated in a system of forced loans based on a property census (the *estimo*) and serviced out of public revenues, initially at 5% interest (which was invariably the case with government loans). The interest payments were reduced progressively to as little as 1.5% and were soon years in arrears with the result that the share price declined until the original shares, by that time largely

in the possession of charitable institutions, were finally redeemed in the XVIth century at 2.5% of par. The system was succeeded in 1463 by a more productive direct tax, the "decima", and voluntary loans in the form of annuities administered by the mint to pay for Venice's interminable wars on land and on sea.

It is worth noting that thanks to a long series of partial defaults, Venice in the Middle Ages was never hopelessly overburdened by the interest charges on her permanent debt, which amounted to 20-30% of the budget, as was the case, for example, at Genoa and Florence. By the close of the XVIth century, with the extinction of the different components of successive borrowings and funding, most at a fraction of their par values, she was, in fact, the only great power in Europe free of debt and, even more extraordinary, she could boast a tidy "war chest" of some 12 million ducats.

For all those interested in the history of banking and finance at Venice or elsewhere, in the Middle Ages or later, the present work was well worth the wait.

John Day

Paris

G. ROSOLI, *Insieme oltre le frontiere. Momenti e figure dell'azione della Chiesa tra gli emigrati italiani nei secoli XIX e XX*, Salvatore Sciascia Editore, Caltanissetta-Roma, 1996, pp. 675.

The scarce attention paid by Italian historians to the subject of emigration as an integral part of Italian history has been repeatedly lamented in the past. It has also been pointed out several times that the history of the Church - if we leave aside anecdotal and hagiographical works - has shown only a marginal interest in the apostolic work of religious people among Italian emigrants. The research into the history of migration that Gianfausto Rosoli has carried on for over twenty years aims above all to fill this very serious gap which concerns a group of people who have been aptly defined as the "foreigners from Italy".

What impact did the formation of Italian emigrant communities have on the host society and what kinds of problem did they give rise to? What facilities were organised by the local Church for such communities and with what effect? What experiences derived from this encounter, not just from a religious point of view but also as regards institutions, education, associations and the socio-political situation? What role did religious orders play in the professional training of emigrants and in their adjustment to new economic conditions?

These are the main questions that Gianfausto Rosoli has set out to answer in his studies which range from analyses of specific aspects of Italian emigration in numerous monographical works (many of which have appeared in the *Studi Emigrazione* of which he is the editor) to the editing of wide collections of essays written by historians from all over the world, including, among the more recent works: *L'Italia nella società argentina* (1988) whose co-editor is F. D. Devoto,

and *L'identità degli Italiani in Argentina. Reti sociali, famiglia, lavoro* (1993). Rosoli has also published major works of synthesis such as *La Emigración Italiana desde 1861 hasta Nuestros Dias*, included in the book *Italia y América* (1994) which he wrote with A. Albonico as well as studies of the lives of great churchmen who were active in apostolic work for emigration, such as the recent book on the life and work of the Blessed Scalabrini.

The book *Insieme Oltre le Frontiere* testifies to these long years of training and the fruits they have brought forth, not only because studies already published by Rosoli in the last ten years are revised and enlarged, but above all because the work is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the Church's presence among emigrants and the second with the religious figures most associated with such a presence. This division brings out one of the issues which is very dear to the heart of Rosoli in his research on emigration: namely the possibility of distinguishing between the work of those who knew how to interpret or even anticipate the needs of emigrant communities and provide answers to them, the activity promoted by the Church as an institution and movements which arose spontaneously in the community.

Consistent with such an approach, the book opens with an essay of synthesis on the characteristics of church action with regard to migration, providing a periodisation of migratory flows from Italy, a break-down of the cultural and religious problems posed by the formation of communities according to areas that generated emigration and those that received it, a description of early church activity which occurred without the coordination of the Holy See and religious Orders, and the way in which such activity was subsequently institutionalised through the creation of the *Opera Bonomelli*, the special emigration office set up by the Consistorial Congregation etc. Within this general picture - which also includes changes in the characteristics of migration and in the kind of aid given to emigrants in the period between the wars after the second World War - Rosoli proceeds to examine particular aspects and figures.

Among the areas generating emigration, in the first part of the book Rosoli examines in particular the case of South Italy and Sicily. As is well known, of the five million Italians who emigrated in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, three fifths came from the northern regions of Italy, yet in the first decade of this century the ratio was inverted and after the second World War southern emigration enjoyed an undisputed supremacy. Thus, in the two areas of the country the phases of emigration differed, as did the capacity for intervention on its behalf. The action of the Church in South Italy lagged behind due to weaknesses in the South's ecclesiastical structures, especially after Unification, following the abolition of ecclesiastical estates although according to Rosoli this applied more to the activity of ordinary diocesans and the Orders rather than to the lower clergy; there are still very few studies on the extent to which parish priests took part in the extraordinary exodus of churchgoers, in the transformation

of the parish from being a real centre of peasant life into an imaginary and spiritual term of reference for emigrants, and in the introduction of the economic innovations brought home by repatriates.

We know more about the cases of churchmen who sought to preserve ties with members of their congregations who emigrated by sending out brothers, especially when a community moved to the same host community in a very organised way. The image of the priest who speculated on emigration and profited from it, which was created by anti-clerical writers at the end of the nineteenth century, is thus countered by the action of priests who followed their flocks abroad: priests from Lucania and Campania went to Uruguay and the Brazilian state of Rio Grand do Sol in the 1880s. In the same period Jesuits from the Naples' province were active in the United States, while the Suore Battistine, founded by Canon Alfonso Fusco, and the Discepoli di Gesù Eucaristico, founded by the Bishop of Tricarico Raffaello delle Nocche, settled among Italian emigrants in France and Brazil.

Rosoli makes the point that the huge flow of emigrants from South Italy to the United States led to the "southern question" being raised again in this destination of emigration, of which churchmen were the interpreters. Southern Italian religiosity, which was often accused of superstition, appeared far removed not only from Anglo-Saxon culture but also from the forms of worship practised by communities of emigrants from other parts of Italy, and it is interesting to note that the actions of priests aimed to bring the community together through worship. Yet even within southern emigration there were differences; especially significant in this connection was the migratory movement from Sicily, not only because such migration began to grow only at the start of the new century but above all because it was almost exclusively directed towards the United States.

The growth in the island's population, the worsening of the agricultural crisis and the spread of political tension which, with the *Fasci siciliani*, culminated in a peculiar kind of social disorder unknown to other parts of Italy, explain why the stagnant economic equilibrium that had been created after Unification was upset, engendering a migratory spiral at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the same time, the insular nature of Sicilian communities meant that migratory chains tended to involve a limited number of destinations. This also explains the formation of Sicilian urban villages in the large American cities in which emigrants were strongly attached to the symbols of their own group identity and especially to religious traditions.

The world of Italian emigrants in America is one of the focal points of Rosoli's research. In the book under review, he looks firstly at the various works by historians who have dealt with the relationship between religion and immigration in the United States and then dwells on an episode which reflects very clearly this relationship: the spread of a religious meaning for the celebration of 1 May among the Italian community, as a holiday for christian labour, an episode which symbolically reflected the full assimilation of the community into American society.

A major role in the process of assimilation - both as regards north and south America - was played by catholic associations which acted as mediators between emigrant communities and surrounding society. Devotional associations based on charity which were more linked to religious practice, lay associations based on patronage, the popular press and cultural promotion, and lastly mutual help, cooperatives, trade unions and political associations all safeguarded the emigrant by allowing him to be a member of an organised group and to assist his assimilation into the community. At the same time, the universal nature of church action and the fact that the initiatives of its representatives were directed indiscriminately at both emigrants and local inhabitants, encouraged communication in a context in which many tensions were mitigated.

This aspect is particularly noticeable in relation to the catholic organisations involved in helping Italian emigrants in Argentina at the turn of the century. Despite some rivalry with Mazzinian and anti-clerical associations, catholic organisations - led mainly by the Salesians - worked for the welfare of the entire Italian community. The spread of male and female congregations who were active in helping Italian emigrants led to the setting up of a federation to coordinate action. Upon the initiative of Ernesto Schiaparelli, secretary of the National Association of Aid to Italian Missionaries, *Italica Gens* was set up in Turin in 1909. Its aim, which was not so much religious as cultural and political, was to promote the initiatives of catholic organisations among the government and to get public bodies to adopt policies which were more in line with those of the organisations.

Italica Gens was very successful, especially in promoting action for education and training, but in the case of Argentina, the activity of catholic associations was facilitated by the relative concentration of Italian communities. In the case of Brazil, on the other hand, the action of such groups was hampered by the vastness of the territory and by the dispersion of Italian communities; in the absence of local clergy who were equipped to perform such a mission, the Church aided emigrants mainly by sending out churchmen from the same areas of emigration.

Within Brazil, however, we should distinguish between settlements in *fazendas* and in urban areas and those in rural areas. While in the case of the former, aid to Italian emigrants encountered many obstacles, in the case of the latter the arrival and spread of churchmen coincided with the birth of settlements and did not involve conflict with existing religious bodies. Moreover, as soon as they had the opportunity, Italians abandoned the *fazendas*, which in terms of earnings, standard of living and owner-worker relations were considered inadequate, and moved to areas with farm land where it was possible to fulfil their ambitions of becoming small-holders.

The history of Italian communities in Brazil, in whose life the church had a central role as contemporaries themselves acknowledged, is also linked to the cultural policies and the safeguarding of *italianità* promoted during fascism which

brings us to another important aspect of Rosoli's research on emigration: the relationship between Italian political history and emigrant aid. In particular, Rosoli examines the actions of both catholic associations giving aid to emigrants, which were revived to counter the actions of socialist aid during S. Pio X's pontificate at a time when modernism was under attack, and missionary organisations which operated among emigrants in France during the Fascist period.

In the latter case, the regime's desire to link migration to the objectives of foreign policy and to exercise greater control over aid associations and more generally over all the organisations which were active among emigrants, gave rise to a sharp conflict between the Church and fascism. The conflict was particularly harsh at the end of the 1920s, when Italian missionaries suffered intimidation and the regime sought to take over control of the *Opera Bonomelli*; in the end the Holy See decided to opt for the Opera's closure. Nonetheless, within the Italian community in France, where the presence of political refugees was particularly marked, there were episodes when anti-clerical opposition identified the Church with the regime and despite the persecutions suffered by fascism, many clerics engaged in providing aid to emigrants were subject to acts of violence.

A victim of such violence was Noradino Torricella who died in 1944. Torricella was a missionary who operated in the rural south-west of France, to whom Rosoli dedicates one of the most interesting portrayals contained in the second part of the book in which the religious figures engaged in the work of aid for emigrants are examined. A pioneer in this field was S. Vincenzo Pallotti who in 1844 had already sent out one of his priests to London to assist emigrants. His followers were later sent out to New York in 1884 and to the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sol. Another major figure among those providing spiritual and material aid to emigrants was S. Giovanni Bosco who began his mission in Argentina in 1875 with the evangelisation of Patagonia and then turned to assist the 30,000 Italians in Buenos Aires and those scattered in the *pampas*. Towards the end of the century the Salesians turned their attention to Italian emigrants in the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

Other than S. Giovanni Bosco and Noradino Torricella, Rosoli gives an account of two outstanding churchmen, Scalabrini and Bonomelli and other lesser known figures associated with emigrant aid such as the missionary Massimo Rinaldi, Bishop Ferdinando Rodolfi, Monsignor Costantino Babini and Cardinal Raffaello Rossi. Although it is not possible to review the contents of each essay it is useful to underline the way that Rosoli's research throws light on the effects that migration had on the economy, an aspect which links the two parts of the book.

For example, in the case of Sicily, Rosoli starts by defining the amount of capital needed to finance emigration, both as regards the money the emigrants took with them and the human capital in terms of the emigrants' know-how, and then goes on to consider the economic impact that emigration had on Sicilian society. After unification, the impoverishment of the lower classes, whose inevitable outlet was

emigration, added to the deep crisis that was already affecting traditional occupations and to changes in the social structure. However, in his analysis of the economic aspects of migration, Rosoli reveals an unexpected vitality in Sicilian society in its ability to mobilise so many resources and to express an autonomous will through emigration in the face of central government inertia and the ineptitude of the local political and economic elites. This will is even more striking if we consider that the main means for choosing emigrants' destinations was the local family network.

Another example of the way Rosoli's analysis of the economic aspects of migration enables him to widen our understanding and knowledge of the societies generating and receiving emigrants comes from the already-mentioned essay on the significance of May Day among Italian communities in the United States. Rosoli notes that from its constitution in 1869 the first national trade union of the Knights of Labour had a strong Catholic element. Active in the campaign for an eight-hour day, after the bloody events of Haymarket on 1 May 1886, the movement was joined by another workers' organisation which was explicitly associated with the Church, the American Federation. Through these organisations, in the United States Labour Day came to signify the rejection of production culture, that is rejection of the myth of development intended as mere production, and the affirmation of rights attained through work such as the right to days off, medical assistance, a fixed number of working hours, a pension etc. But above all, it was through the spread of Italian and Irish emigrant communities that the influence of Catholic workers' organisations grew.

The network of solidarity established during the first World War through the National Catholic War Council, which aimed mainly to bring aid to emigrants whose sons had gone to fight in Europe, gave rise to an articulate programme for reforming the American economy after the war. The programme pointed to the inefficiency of the production and distribution system, the insufficient income level of wage labourers and the great inequality in the distribution of income as the main shortcomings of the economy. To respond to such shortcomings the programme called for more professional training, the introduction of social security and controls over the cost of living, more workers' participation in company management, an increase in the cooperative system, the abolition of or stricter controls over monopoly and more generally an increase in income from labour. As is well known, many of these proposals were very slow to be implemented in the United States and some of them were never implemented at all, but it is interesting to note, as Rosoli does, the relationship between migratory movements and these as well as other programmes to reform the American economy.

As these examples illustrate, Rosoli's studies have not only contributed to widening the field of research on the economic history of migration, in particular in the American subcontinent, ranging from the definition of the extent of the phenomenon and its geographical distribution to the broader analysis of the socio-economic aspects of human settlements which generated and received

emigrants, but they have also developed interesting methodological syntheses in which traditional analyses based on attraction-repulsion principles combine with studies based on the theory of migratory chains. Owing to this flexibility in his methodological approach, Rosoli is able to examine the evolution of migratory processes and the system of aid that accompanied them not just within a strictly historical context but also in relation to the present, linking the challenges that the Church received and responded to in the past to the new challenges that migration pose for the future of Christian civilisation..

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A. ZABALDA SEGUÍN, *Aldeas y campesinos en la Navarra prepirenaica* (1550-1817), Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de Educación y Cultura, Pamplona, 1994, pp.301.

Drawing on the works of a growing number of young researchers, studies on the history of European agriculture have, in recent years, greatly increased. Although a number of interesting works on the subject appeared in the past, nonetheless they have always been much fewer than the studies concerned with the reconstruction of industrial processes and have occupied a subordinate position in the hierarchy of economic history. This condition was clearly in contradiction with the actual facts of economic development: agriculture had for a long period formed the basis of European society, absorbing very high levels of resources and of the active population. Thus, the limited interest in the primary sector prevented us from fully understanding the basic stages in the process of economic development in nearly all the areas of the Old Continent.

In recent years, however, the proliferation of studies on well-defined areas and specific themes has greatly increased our understanding of agricultural developments and trends and has enabled us to set aside global interpretations which, while stimulating, did not allow us to assess the importance of such development from a sectoral and geographical point of view. Ana Zabalda Seguin's enquiry is one such study. Adopting a monographical approach, it sets out to illustrate the production processes and crop and ownership systems in a specific area, the Lumbier-Aoiz Valley, which is situated in Navarra (one of the most widely-studied regions of Spain in recent years among Spanish historians) lying between the Pyrenees and the Ebro Valley. The *cuenca* has a climate which is affected by Atlantic and Mediterranean currents; this circumstance, together with the region's particular topographical conditions, greatly favoured the development of agriculture, above all cereal growing. This characteristic of the area's economic development has remained unchanged even in the twentieth century, although in the nineteenth century vinegrowing, which was already practised in the region, spread especially following the incidence of phylloxera

in many vinegrowing areas in Europe.

The dominant characteristic of the whole area under study is its peripheral position; it is fundamentally a border region lying on the edge of the major international trade routes and the creation of a single market linking all the villages in the area has been a very complex and piecemeal process. Nonetheless peripheral does not mean immobilism and the absence of external relations; on the contrary it was the lack of a single internal market which highlighted the influences and stimuli that came from other parts of Spain and from the Old Continent generally. The fact that society here has undergone constant transformation emerges from the opening pages of the book. By examining a mass of documentary evidence, especially notary records, the author is able to demonstrate the extremely dynamic relations that existed between the native population and the area under study. This is usually a much neglected aspect in studies dealing with the history of agriculture which take for granted the development of relations between human groups and the surrounding territory, whilst for Zabaldá Seguín such relations are crucial in helping us to understand the gradual and at times very difficult and costly process of humanising the environment in which individuals settle. The choices (both forced and unforced) made by human groups which have settled in different areas determine landscapes, types of dwellings, crop systems and contractual conditions.

It is interesting to note that although it was a peripheral area, the *cuenca* experienced periodic waves of immigration which in some cases, as in the period following the demographic decline in the fourteenth century, had the important function of making up for the considerable losses caused by a series of disasters. The alternating of population crises with periods of partial recovery occurred up until the beginning of the nineteenth century, although within the *cuenca* the process was differentiated. The area around the Aoiz agglomeration showed greater capacity for demographic recovery; this was due largely to the fact that this area had its own renowned handicraft traditions together with a lucrative specialisation in vinegrowing. Therefore the need for a large number of daily labourers, especially in the agricultural sector, attracted many inhabitants from neighbouring areas, making Aoiz one of the most active areas in the region under study.

Demographic trends in the period being examined endorse the theme of periphery. Although the *cuenca's* characteristics as an area of transit and trade exchange remained unchanged, urban centres had very modest and basically stagnating growth rates, while agriculture emerged as the region's dominant sector. Although it was a place of transit there was no indigenous organisational capacity to promote and develop a far-reaching trade network and trade was increasingly left to external agents who had the basic role of mediating and linking demand to external supply.

Agriculture was the dominant sector in the region's economy, but what kind of farming are we talking about? This is not an easy question to answer

and Zabalda Seguín is aware that a simple scrutiny of the available documentation gives us only a partial insight into the *cuencana's* rural history. What is incontrovertible is the increase in the total area placed under cultivation from around 22% in 1607 to about 28% in 1817. Although a few areas - especially in the countryside around Apiz, Longuida, Urroz and Lumbier - specialised in certain crops such as vines that were mostly directed at the international market, production typology was fairly consistent throughout the period under study and was based on the principle of autarky which became increasingly marked over time. Moreover the importance of the *saltus*, that is the area which was left uncultivated, increased. Although such areas were free from cultivation this does not mean that they were unproductive; on the contrary they had different uses and a large number of functions, including their use as grazing land for cattle, the main beneficiaries of uncultivated land. Therefore the *saltus* had a major influence on the growth of human settlements in the area. In this respect it is easy to discern a clear dividing line within the *cuencana*: on one hand an area mostly given over to crop farming where man's actions were more noticeable and significant and on the other hand an area exclusively used for pastoral husbandry, especially beef-cattle farming, where spatial constraints often forced human groups to behave in a merely defensive way.

This fact emerges very clearly when we examine the role of the mountain areas in the *cuencana's* economy. These were indispensable for activities connected to transhumance. Zabalda Seguín argues that, although many efforts were made by the humans settled in such areas to bring them more into line with the economic interests of the whole region, they basically kept intact their original identity and rather than a radical change affecting the land we notice only a reduction in archaism.

The plains, on the other hand, underwent great transformation due to the agricultural activities carried on by the human groups that had settled there. Symbols of such metamorphosis was the countryside around Iragaonda and Urroz where, thanks to the unceasing labour of human settlers, it was possible to extend the area under cultivation at the expense of traditional occupations connected to cattle-farming. In the light of recent research about the subject, Zabalda Seguín believes that we should overcome the traditional agriculture-livestock farming dichotomy and carry out a deeper enquiry to understand the great extent of written and unwritten evidence concerning an issue which has largely been unexplored; for example, the defence of the fields and the role that guards were especially appointed to perform. Examining the available records we have to acknowledge that it is difficult to know all the activity related to the management of common fields.

In this context we must include the research into ownership systems which, as is well known, did not remain unchanged throughout the centuries. Indeed changes in the concept of landownership show how risky it is in

agricultural history to reconstruct events concerning rural society from an essentially static point of view. Right from the start, ownership was mixed and private property co-existed with public property. It was only later that the structure of ownership developed those features that became characteristic of private property, although this was by no means a straightforward process and we should stress that problems posed by the public ownership of fields had to be reckoned with. Zabalda Seguín repeatedly draws attention to these issues, such as the permission to harvest crops on land belonging to public property requested by big private landowners who sought increasingly to extend their ownership over these lands, and the rights that village communities continued to claim over land which had by custom passed into private hands.

The choice of crop and the technological innovations that affected agrarian systems were directly related to this aspect of rural life. We can certainly agree with Zabalda Seguín when she states that population growth cannot lead us to interpret the increase in cultivated land exclusively from the point of view of cause and effect. The issue is much more complex and has to focus on the flexible relationship between *ager* and *saltus* which was by no means progressive. Undoubtedly changes in ownership systems were crucial and it is by no accident that they are given greater weight than population trends in this book. The decision whether to cultivate cereals, which certainly from the point of view of investments and care needed required less effort, or to plant vines which on the contrary was much more demanding and costly, depended on whether the owner wished to tie his production to domestic demand or risk competition on the international market. Methods of cultivation were of course affected by such decisions and the very term rotation had different applications which were not properly dictated by population trends, although the latter might have had some influence.

Nonetheless, this was an *ancien regime* society reaching well beyond the chronological limits that we normally use to define such a period. It is not by accident that Zabalda Seguín focuses on the *cuencana*'s elites and notes that although there was sharp conflict and a fair degree of change and metamorphosis, the upper classes formed part of an organic society with a good level of internal cohesion in which each group performed different functions. Naturally, in this kind of society independence implied economic and social marginalisation. As a result conformity was a necessary option in order to guarantee one's own subsistence since each individual had to interact with other members of the community if he wanted to have a well-defined social and economic identity. Agrarian individualism was a very risky and difficult undertaking. The geographical extension of these communities was, however, limited; this is borne out by the lack of a central market, the atomisation of village life and the absence of a single name to designate the *cuencana* in its entirety.

In conclusion the book brings out the complex and in some ways

subordinate and defensive relationship characterising the different human groups settled in the region, and this appears to be the dominant theme developed by Zabalda Seguin throughout the study.

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