

the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, revealing how the inhabitants cannily developed strategies and discourses to defend their liberties.

The third part of the book turns to comparison. After Bang's chapter, a pair of chapters—one by Walter Scheidel about East and West Eurasia and the other by Chris Wickham about late Rome and the Arab Caliphate—study fiscal sociology. Stephen Blake's account of the inner politics of the Mughal, Safavid, and Ottoman Empires is a tour de force. The volume concludes with a chapter by Karen Barkey and Rudi Batzell explaining the different responses of the Ottomans, Romanovs, and Hapsburgs to the general crisis of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The contributors, justly celebrated as experts in their respective fields, write at the top of their form. Anyone wanting to understand the mechanisms of rule in premodern empires, and much more, would do well to start with this volume.

John A. Hall  
McGill University

*Dove va la storia economica? Metodi e prospettive, secc. XIII–XVIII (Where is Economic History Going? Methods and Prospects from the 13th to the 18th Centuries)*. Edited by Francesco Ammannati (Florence, Firenze University Press, 2011) 566 pp. N.P.

In 1410, Francesco Datini, the son of Marco, better known to economic historians as the merchant of Prato, died, leaving behind the largest business archives of late medieval Europe, including over 120,000 letters received from partners and agents from across Europe and the Mediterranean. On the 500th anniversary of his death, the International Institute named after Datini devoted its annual conference to a broad-ranging assessment of the methods and perspectives adopted by economic historians of pre-industrial Europe (with marginal interest in the Ottoman Empire).

The volume is divided into four sections. The first, entitled “Old and New Insights in the Different Linguistic Regions: The Topics,” contains eight chapters, each one concerning the varying fortunes and changing topical interests in the field, as seen from the academic scholarship in each of the main European languages and in Turkish. With a few exceptions (namely, Jan de Vries' confidence in the healthy condition of Dutch economic history), most of the authors lament a decline in interest in economic history among academic historians. They are often able to document this decline with quantitative surveys of peer-review journals' output and the relative representation of economic historians among university faculty. This section is the only one followed by a dis-

1 See also the special issue, “The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Interdisciplinary Perspectives,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XL (2009), 145–303.

cussant's rejoinder—a useful tool that helps readers to reflect critically on several, disjointed contributions.

In his remarks, Marco Belfanti counterbalances the general pessimism by stressing the success of business history and the scholarship on recent economic phenomena and crises. He also maintains that “the golden age” of the economic history of pre-industrial Europe (which he dates to the decades between 1960 and 1990) coincided with a time when economic history provoked debates among a wider audience because of its methodological innovations. But Belfanti mainly hints at the question of how we might make that moment come alive again (with reference to the need for more collaboration among national historiographies and continued archival research). This theme looms large over the volume as a whole but is never addressed in a sustained fashion. The second section (“Old and New Insights: Tools”) collects ten chapters, each devoted to one type of primary source used by economic historians—government records, notarial deeds, literary texts, maps, the visual arts, archeological digs, and the private collections of noble families and merchants.

The third section (“Old and New Insights: Relationships with Other Subjects”) seeks to address the controversy surrounding the use of economic theory and quantitative methods (which emerges elsewhere as well). Paolo Malanima emphasizes the importance of both approaches and thus implicitly responds to Alberto Grohmann, whose earlier chapter bemoans the growing recourse to “economic and mathematical models” and “large data bases” at the expense of the use of “archival documents” (34–35). Mark Thomas states that “the economic history literature of early modern Europe was richly quantitative long before formal statistical methods became *de rigueur*” (430). He then examines the specific statistical methods that have had the greatest impact in the field—regression analysis of cross-section data and time series—but he also discusses nonparametric and spatial analysis, including Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Guillaume Daudin continues this assessment by charting the use of different quantitative methods in journals accessible via JSTOR and by summarizing important insights gained through econometrics about specific topics. Supposing that “we all aspire at being foxes rather than hedgehogs” (458), Daudin offers a balanced account of the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative methods, which he examines in their broad variety, to include the “analytical narratives” advocated by new institutional economic historians whose ambition is “to extract generalizations from case studies” (471).

The volume ends with an eclectic “Concluding Round Table.” Its first three chapters trace the representation of scholarship on the pre-industrial period in three academic journals: *Investigaciones de Historia Económica*, *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, and *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*. Four brief pieces end the collection with reflections on the future of economic history in Germany (where the prevalence of practitioners who use econometrics is disputed), Italy

(where the discipline is described as conditioned by different institutional constraints in economics and humanistic departments), France (where the influence of Michel Foucault, gender history, and literary criticism is shown to have had a crucial impact on expanding the themes and methodologies used by economic and social historians), Russia (where information technology [IT] and statistics are said to be rejuvenating the field and attracting students), and Poland (where after the fall of the Berlin Wall, university curricula have excluded the economic analysis of past societies to concentrate on the recent emergence of the market economy).

As is customary, the proceedings of the annual Datini conferences include texts in multiple languages (this time Italian, French, English, and Spanish) that are not always written by native speakers and that are not revised or copyedited before going to print. The result is, once again, a volume that lacks neither useful information nor insights but stands in desperate need of structure, connecting threads, and basic editing.

Francesca Trivellato  
Yale University

*Beyond Our Means: Why America Spends While the World Saves.* By Sheldon Garon (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012) 475 pp. \$29.95

Why are some people like Aesop's grasshopper while others are like ants? Why, indeed, are whole countries inclined to grasshopper-like improvidence while others are ant-like in their dedication to thrift? These are the questions that Garon tackles via a transnational and historical study of what we might call "small-savings culture."

The core of the book, five of its twelve chapters, is devoted to the origins, institutionalization, and fate of thrift practices and bank savings in Japan. Garon, as a specialist in Japanese history, might well be expected to write about the Japanese, and, more generally, the East Asian propensity toward industriousness and thriftiness. Indeed, he supplies a fascinating account of Tokugawa-era exemplars of self-denial and savings. But to him, culture "is formed and re-formed by ideas and institutions" and especially by state policy. Consequently, he finds that the famed Japanese inclination to save, far from being eternal, took shape as the Meiji government introduced the savings institutions and propaganda agencies that had been developed earlier in Europe. He therefore embeds this story into the history of a larger, transnational movement to encourage thrift among the popular classes.

His account of Japanese thrift is interlarded with chapters about the emergence of a cult of thrift in Europe and America (redolent of Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Smiles); the creation of accessible financial institutions (savings banks, mutual banks, and building societies); and the



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