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La famiglia nell'economia europea secoli XIII–XVIII

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Grafton and Williams offer an engaging account of generally unfamiliar material, deploying an impressive range of evidence and methods. They discuss Origen in the context of the textual studies of Greek philosophers. They use demography to explore the world of early Christian scholarship and life. They examine Alexandrian techniques of exegesis, the study of the Bible by both traditional and Hellenized Jews, the role of patronage in ancient literary life, and the culture of the book in transition from roll to codex and from private home to institutional scriptorium. They show Origen and Eusebius breaking new ground by subsuming “barbarian” materials (Jewish, Samaritan, Egyptian, and others) into the methodological worlds of Greek philosophy and history.

Though a readable introduction to obscure materials, the book may not satisfy experts. Origen’s *Hexapla* was a technical and scholarly marvel, but no more than one complete copy of it may ever have existed. Eusebius’ *Chronicle* was difficult to design, but no more difficult to copy than any other book. These were major works, but they did not change the world; even Grafton and Williams do not claim any direct effect on Western European scholarship. Their accounts of much of the technical material (the philosophical schools, the demography of early Christianity, and even the format of the *Hexapla* itself) each come from one modern source on which they rely to excess; they rarely discuss the primary evidence in any detail, and when they do, they make mistakes. To buttress their claims for Caesarea, they pay little attention to earlier examples of complex texts or sophisticated patterns of dissemination. Institutional structures for the dissemination of Christian learning and texts existed earlier in the East, but ecclesiastical scriptoria in Italy soon took up the task that the government abandoned. Moreover, although Eusebius’ construction of human history in an accessible (and tendentious) form was, through Jerome, hugely influential, writing about Christian historiography without once mentioning Augustine’s *City of God* seems odd.

There was no one path that led from the Christian Bible to later European scholarship. Oversimplification of this nature can result in a good story, but the reality was much more complicated.

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La famiglia nell'economia europea secoli XIII–XVIII. Edited by Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Florence, Firenze University Press, 2009) 790 pp. €65,00

La famiglia nell'economia europea secoli XIII–XVIII comprises forty-three essays in Italian, English, French, Spanish, and German (one). In addition to poor editing and, in some cases, inadequate English translation, the volume evinces uneven scholarship. It neither advances new, provocative theses about the history of the family and its economic role in pre-industrial Europe nor applies innovative research methods. That the

history of the family has long been at the center of lively debates and fertile cross-disciplinary collaborations in the humanities and social sciences is not the object of any consequential reflection. Most of the contributions either discuss isolated cases studies or offer a bird's eye view of a topic based on secondary literature.

Experts in the field will not learn any important new lessons about such classic topics as the transition from partible inheritance to primogeniture, the role of marital alliances in elite class formation, and the function of dowries in commercial and artisanal activities. (Little attention is devoted to peasants, in part because of the paucity of primary sources and in part because of the topics selected by the authors who responded to the call for papers.) Historians of the family may thus wish to consult the table of contents online to determine whether any of the essays pique their curiosity.¹ For non-specialists, the absence of a comprehensive thematic bibliography limits the usefulness of this collective volume. Finally, unlike older proceedings of the conferences held by the Datini International Institute of Economic History, this one does not include a transcript of the Q&A sessions, during which controversial ideas are aired and debated.

The most substantial piece in the volume is Tina de Moor, Jan Luiten van Zanden, and Jacob Zuijderduijn's study of the credit market in a Dutch mid-size town and its surrounding countryside from 1452 to 1563. On the basis of a large dataset and an initial but revealing comparison with fifteenth-century Tuscany, the authors argue that women of all social strata had considerably more access to capital markets in Holland than in Italy. Although only partially based on original research, other essays nonetheless contribute insightful syntheses and suggest new research venues, particularly Giovanni Ceccarelli's on marine insurance and Simon Teuscher's on property devolution in the late Middle Ages. Surprisingly, only one author (Ariadne Schmidt) mentions and engages with de Vries' concept of "industrious revolution," undoubtedly the boldest recent reassessment of the economic role of women's work and the household in pre-industrial Europe.²

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1 http://www.fupress.com/Archivio/*pdf\3355*.pdf.

2 Admittedly the most complete formulation of Jan de Vries' theory appeared in print a few months after the essays in this volume had been submitted for publication (*The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* [New York, 2008]). But the gist of it had already appeared in "Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods: Understanding the Household Economy in Early Modern Europe," in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (New York, 1993), 85–132, and "The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution," *Journal of Economic History*, LIV (1994), 249–270.