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Rassegna di Storia rurale

Raccolta periodica di recensioni e segnalazioni bibliografiche
a cura del gruppo RU-LAV Lavoro e lavoratori rurali di SISLAV

n. 1, novembre 2015

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Frederic Aparisi & Vicent Royo (eds.), *Beyond Lords and Peasants: Rural Elites and Economic Differentiation in Pre-Modern Europe*, València, Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2014, pp. 256, ISBN: 978-84-370-9261-4.

Reviewed for «Scripta» (juny 2015) by Daniel R. Curtis, Universiteit Utretcht.
https://ojs.uv.es/index.php/scripta/article/view/6374

Over the past 50 years of rural social and economic history, there have been a number of conceptions of how village communities in pre-industrial Western Europe were organised. For example, there was a spate of literature from the 1960s and 1970s, when localised micro-studies of rural communities were at their height with the Toronto School, suggesting that the medieval village community was essentially harmonious, cooperative, and based more around ideals of egalitarianism and cohesiveness. This view, taken particularly from medieval England, had further support for areas of Northwest Europe in the transition from the late Middle Ages to the early modern period by a number of works by Peter Blickle on the so-called 'autonomous' rural commune, the Gemeinde. Other early works, in the tradition of Richard Tawney, lamented the impact of the development of agrarian capitalism – loosening in the early modern period the bonds of cohesiveness and equality that apparently characterised medieval village communities. Elsewhere, the neo-Marxist view, established most clearly in the 1970s by Robert Brenner, highlighted instead the dialectic opposition between rural communities as subordinates to the whims of lordly extraeconomic oppression. None of these views are now accepted – at least not in their entirety. What has been made clear, probably in works starting from the 1980s onwards, is that (a) lord and peasant relationships were not always oppositional, but also more importantly (b) the peasant community was never a homogenous whole in the pre-industrial period. Such were the levels of internal stratification between peasants, that some scholars have even doubted the utility of term 'community' at all – see the (at the time) revisionist works of Alan McFarlane on the 'origins of English individualism'.

And that is where this highly valuable book picks up from – moving 'beyond lords and peasants' as a simple opposition. The 'rural elites' discussed in the various chapters do not concern aristocrats or seigneurial lords, but actually the different forms of differentiation and stratification between the layers of the peasantry, farmers, or 'common folk' themselves. It is quite fitting that Christopher Dyer has been enlisted with the task of drawing together the main conclusions of the book, for it is arguably he more than any other rural historian (certainly of the medieval period at least) that has had the most profound influence on establishing a more nuanced vision of the medieval community – something in-between the extreme poles of 'communalism' and 'class conflict'.

What is clear from the chapters, taking in a range of rural societies of the pre-industrial period from the Southern Low Countries, the Kingdom of Valencia, and Southern England, is that notions of cohesiveness and cooperation, or stratification, polarisation, and subordination, were not the same all across Western Europe, and in fact were highly divergent according to social context. Bruce Campbell in a very long and important article published in 2005 in the Past and Present journal, once suggested that much of the economic and demographic crises seen in the late Middle Ages in Western Europe were compounded not by lordly extraction from subordinates but actually through tenant on tenant extortion – essentially emphasizing the actions of wealthier or more powerful peasants acting to the detriment of their poorer commoner neighbours. There is much truth to that, and is supported even in some of the chapters of the book – see for example the story presented by Vicent Royo for some regions of late-medieval rural Valencia, where elite peasants used their administrative and local political influences to secure their own private access rights to communal pastures – to the detriment to the rest of the peasant community. What many of the other chapters do though is show that while rural village communities were indeed highly stratified and not homogenous wholes at all, such diversity of different social interest groups did not necessarily lead to a breakdown in community cohesion or elements of imbalanced extortion.

A classic example of this is the final two chapters of the book by Maïka De Keyzer and Eline Van Onacker focusing on the rural societies of the Campine region of Brabant, where it is claimed that a form of 'social equilibrium' was maintained between tenant farmers, small independent peasants, and cottagers (acting within another favourable power equilibrium of territorial lord, urban governments, and local lords) in order to maintain the effective functioning of significant communal institutions over the long term such as the common pastures and heaths. Peasant stratification then cannot always be considered an outright proxy for lack of communal cohesiveness.

The quality of the chapters in the book is consistently quite high, but two in particular stand out for their innovation. The most innovative in terms of methodology is a contribution by Kristof Dombrecht, who cleverly is able to use cultural and religious practices – that is the arrangement of funerals within a village of Coastal Flanders in the sixteenth century – in order to reveal elements of social and economic hierarchy within the community. Dombrecht goes on to show that the changing trends toward a particular type of burial (dictated by a particular choice of bell toll) and location of burial (in or outside of the church) was evidence for the increasing economic polarisation of the village community from the 1540s onwards. The most innovative chapter in terms of subject material is arguably that by Vicent Baydal Sala and Ferran Esquilache Martí, focusing on the little-studied area of social stratification in the Kingdom of Valencia among the Muslim peasant communities. As the authors themselves attest, we know at present very little about 'rural elites' in Muslim communities of this part of the Iberian Peninsula, and this is a pity, because there are so many interesting avenues to explore – within the very real limitations of the source material. What makes this subject stand out when considering social stratification is of course the very fact that one possibility of political and social ascent for Muslim rural elites was entirely blocked off – Muslims could not scale the feudal hierarchy of the Christian kingdom. The conclusion of the chapter itself is quite open ended and certainly leaves room for further research: essentially the Gini Indexes of distributions of property, wealth and houses are fairly low (in comparison to other regions of Western Europe), suggesting a fairly shallow social and economic hierarchy within the Muslim peasantry. However, at the same time, the authors do suggest that the economic elite of these Muslim communities probably did not reap all of their wealth from agriculture, but more diversified portfolios of economic activity – and therefore we are reminded that property distribution is also not always an accurate indicator of social stratification in itself. A final mention must be made also on the fine chapter by Lies Vervaet on the still under-researched area of leaseholding in late-medieval Flanders. Vervaet's knowledge, expertise and careful handling of the vast amounts of source material is quite exceptional, and her research presents an interesting angle on the exact reasons why institutions (in this case an urban hospital in Bruges) decide to lease out their lands (or not), particularly from the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries onwards. Vervaet shows curiously that the small scattered lease plots in Inland Flanders were more profit oriented, while the large coherent farms were leased out to wealthier tenant farmers who were responsible for provisioning the hospital with foodstuffs and agricultural produce. One aspect missing from the chapter, perhaps a route for the future, would be to delve more into the reasons why the St. John's Hospital of Bruges decided around 1330 to transfer from direct management of the farms through friars and sisters, to indirect management through leasehold – what makes this period so significant? How important is it that this happened before the Black Death, and what was the impact of the Great Famine of 1315-22 on their estate administration?

There are of course some aspects of the book that could have been handled with a little more care – on more than a few occasions does one stumble across a spelling mistake – and the book would have benefitted from a little 'tidy-up' by a native English copyeditor. Given that the amount of available literature in English is very limited on the medieval Kingdom of Valencia though, we must however be thankful for the appearance of the book rather than nitpick over finer language details. One element that certainly could be improved, however, is the use of measurements and the lack of standardisation. Miriam Müller, like so many working on England, uses acres – and this

is always frustrating when trying to compare to mainland European scholars using hectares. More essential than that though is the lack of standardisation when trying to display stratification in farm sizes. Just to use the example of Müller again, in four tables (pp. 75-7) she displays the distribution of landholding sizes for four different manors (two in East Anglia, two in Wiltshire) and yet in every table a different form of categorisation is used. Table 3.1 uses '5 acres', '5-10', '11-20', '21+', 'unknown', while table 3.2 uses 'less than 5 acres', 'cottars', '20', '40+' and table 3.3 uses 'less than 5 acres', '1/2 virgate', '1 virgate', 'more than 1 virgate', 'cottars', 'cottage and mill', and 'unknown' – table 3.4 is also different. How are we to make comparative sense of this – let alone if we want to compare with other regions of Europe? Particularly when terms such as 'cottar' are not even explained to the reader. Notwithstanding this relatively minor criticism, this book has many merits. Indeed, what is particularly encouraging is that the vast majority of the chapters are produced by young rural historians, and is evidence enough that the discipline will have a strong future, if we continue to make interregional comparisons that transcend national historiographies.

Louis A. Ferleger and John D. Metz, *Cultivating Success in the South: Farm Households in the Postbellum Era,* New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014, xiii + 206 pp. $90 (cloth), ISBN: 978-1-107-05411-0.

Reviewed for EH.Net (September 2015) by J. William Harris, Department of History, University of New Hampshire.
http://eh.net/book_reviews/cultivating-success-in-the-south-farm-households-in-the-postbellum-era/

Cultivating Success in the South offers an illuminating examination of the South's post-Civil War cotton economy. Most of the important scholarship on that subject focuses on the momentous change from slave-based plantations to tenant/sharecropping plantations, and to the place of African Americans on those postwar plantations. Economic historians have made use of macroeconomic data and samples from the agricultural censuses to analyze, and sometimes argue over, the roles of racial discrimination, credit and debt, technical changes such as fertilizer use, and cotton prices in shaping the postwar cotton regime.

Louis A. Ferleger (Boston University) and John D. Metz (Library of Virginia) address this subject in a study of three agricultural counties in Georgia from 1880 to 1910. Crawford and Jasper are in the lower Piedmont, where cotton was king and a large majority of white households included slaveholders in 1860. Franklin, in the upper Piedmont, had a shorter growing season, with smaller farms growing less cotton and more grains, and many fewer slaves; just one out of six households included slaves in 1860.

The authors' contributions are two-fold. The first is methodological: their systematic use of probate records to analyze patterns in both production and consumption on farms. The main evidence comes from a sample of 228 estates from the three counties between 1880 and 1910, with data on decedents cross-checked in the records of the 1880, 1900, or 1910 censuses. Probate records have been used with great profit by economic historians of colonial America, but rarely for more recent times, and never for the postwar South, at least in this systematic fashion. The authors' meticulous analysis of the probate inventories supports their contention that their study "calls into question the long-standing notion of an impoverished postbellum South characterized by a stagnating economy, political turmoil, and racial tension" p. (4). (They do not address either politics or racial tension, although one of the counties was stronghold of Populism, and in two of them black men were lynched in these years.)

The second innovation, directly related to the methodology, is in subject matter. Estates worth less than $500 did not go through probate, and wealthy property owners usually avoided probate by writing wills. The sample is thus overwhelmingly made up of "yeoman" farmers, 88 percent of them white men, who owned small and medium-sized farms. While this obviously leaves out much of the farming population, it is arguable that we know less about white small farmers than any other major group in the postwar South, even though most of the increase in cotton production in these years took place on small farms owned by whites.

The key findings come from analysis of 199 probate inventories with enough detail to show, most often with simple cross-tabulations and means, not only general patterns of production and consumption, but also quite specific information on the types of tools used and items purchased for household use. The findings with respect to production are often interesting but rarely surprising. Franklin County's farmers, thanks to fertilizer and improved transportation, moved firmly into cotton monoculture, but in all three counties, production patterns and tool use indicate a cautious, safety-first emphasis on "how to achieve self-sufficiency without assuming a dangerous level of risk" (p. 91). Home production of food, diversification into alternate marketable crops, and the taking up of secondary occupations like blacksmithing helped to reduce risk. With increasing farm size, farmers purchased specialized plows and cultivators, cotton gins, and even steam engines. Inventories for African Americans and women are too few in number for a full analysis, but the limited data do suggest that those farm owners were not greatly different in their patterns of purchases. The authors conclude that, overall, farmers "showed creativity and persistence in trying to improve their lot in life" (p. 180).

The analysis of consumption offers fresh information on a little-studied subject. The most important conclusion is that yeoman farmer households participated fully in the growing consumer economy, although the authors go too far in claiming that the rural economy was "every bit as dynamic as the urban model characterized by increased consumption" (p. 95). Farmers and their wives were "shrewd if conservative consumers" (p. 175) for whom "the practical superseded the niceties" (p. 179). Half of the families owned stoves, and many purchased sewing machines, coffee mills, and other labor-saving products. At higher levels of wealth they owned pianos, organs, clocks, and furniture suitable for a parlor. The authors point out that estate auctions were alternatives to country stores and mail-order catalogues as a source for purchases, at a discount, of tools and consumer items.

Readers should be aware that there are occasional errors in the text. For example, the authors write that "blacks comprised one-fifth" of Georgia's population in 1850, when the actual proportion was more than two-fifths. Tables on pages 48 and 49 indicate that the Crawford County sample included 51 white males, 4 black males, and 5 females, but only 56 cases in total. More problematic is the broad claim that "middling farmers who owned their property … accounted for the majority of the population," and that "owner-operators outnumbered renters by at least two to one" (p. 15). This is simply untrue over the thirty-year period. According to the Census of Agriculture for 1900, there were in these three counties 1,762 white farm owners or part-owners, and 2,257 white cash or share tenants. If black farmers are included, tenants outnumbered owners overall by more than two-to-one, not the other way around. Indeed the presence of so many tenants points to the biggest limitation of the study, in that the analysis of production is mainly limited to mules, tools, and other capital inputs, with no discussion of labor arrangements or of the relationships between labor arrangements and the use of technology.

Still, the authors' meticulous examination of a new (for this period) source for the study of the rural southern economy deserves praise. It may be that their demonstration of the value of probate records, more than their specific conclusions, proves to be their most influential contribution.

John Field, *Working Men's Bodies: Work Camps in Britain 1880–1940*, Manchester University Press, 2013, 276 pp., £ 65 ISBN 978-0-7190-8768-4.

Reviewed for «English Historical Review» (april 2015) by C. G. Krüger, University of Giessen.
http://ehr.oxfordjournals.org/content/130/543/493.extract

With his analysis of the history of work camps in Britain before 1939, John Field has chosen a topic which, until now, has been overlooked by historians. The explanation for this neglect is, as Field states himself, that the idea of labour camps has lost its appeal because of its association with National Socialism. Labour camps were indeed an institution which could easily be used for exerting control and discipline. It is one of Field's most prominent arguments, however, that we are unable to understand the history of work camping if we fix our gaze exclusively on this narrow aspect of the phenomenon. As his study shows, the idea of work camping attracted adherents to an extremely wide range of different religious, political and ideological convictions. And this attraction was possible only because emancipatory effects could be attributed to work camping at the same time as disciplinary ones.
The first two chapters of the book shed light on the beginnings of the work camp idea and the first attempts at its realisation in the second half of the nineteenth century. The third chapter analyses special camps for people thought to be difficult to integrate into normal employment: …
[Per continuare la lettura occorre accedere a
http://ehr.oxfordjournals.org/content/130/543/493.full]

R. A. Houston. *Peasant Petitions: Social Relations and Economic Life on Landed Estates, 1600–1850*, London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Pp. ix + 313. $95 (cloth), ISBN 978-11-373-9408-8.

Reviewed for «Social History» (3/2015) by R.J. Moore-Colyer.
Olny First Page Preview:
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03071022.2015.1044213

W. Ronsijn, *Commerce and the countryside. The rural population's involvement in the commodity market in Flanders, 1750–1910*, Ghent, Accademia Press, 2014, 359 pp., € 40 (paperback), ISBN 978-90-382-2103-8.

Reviewed for «The Journal of peasants studies» (5/2015) by Piet van Cruyningen.
Olny First Page Preview:
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03066150.2015.1072970?journalCode=fjps20

Nadine Vivier (ed.), *The Golden Age of State Enquiries. Rural Enquiries in the Nineteenth Century. From Fact Gathering to Political Instrument*, (Rural History in Europe, vol. 14), Brepols, Turnhout, 2014, 291 pp., € 69,00, ISBN: 978-2-503-55284-2.

Rezensiert für «H-Soz-Kult» (27/10/2015) von Michael C. Schneider, Institut für Geschichtswissenschaften, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf.
http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-23596

Das 19. Jahrhundert war in Europa und weiten Teilen der Welt auch ein Jahrhundert der staatlichen Wissenserzeugung. Die aus der beschreibenden Staatenkunde des 18. Jahrhunderts hervorgegangenen statistischen Büros stehen wie kaum eine andere Institution für das Bestreben der Staaten, möglichst viel über sich in Erfahrung zu bringen und diese Erkenntnisse auf Zahlen zu reduzieren. Während diese Entwicklung unterdessen recht gut erforscht ist, sind die Erkenntnisse zu einem zweiten Strang der staatlichen Wissensproduktion noch weniger ausgereift: Den staatlich veranlassten Enqueten, also umfassenden Befragungen zu einem speziellen Thema, häufig eher qualitativ denn quantitativ ausgerichtet und häufig aus einem bestimmten Anlass durchgeführt. Diesen Enqueten oder „Enquiries" wendet sich der vorliegende Sammelband zu und konzentriert sich dabei auf jene Untersuchungen, die die landwirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse vorwiegend in Europa, aber in einzelnen Beiträgen auch in Mittelamerika oder Kanada zu erhellen versuchten. Die fundamentale Veränderung, auf die der Sammelband Bezug nimmt, ist der in unterschiedlichem Tempo vollzogene Übergang agrarwirtschaftlicher zu industriellen Gesellschaften, mit ihren ganz unterschiedlichen Auswirkungen auf den landwirtschaftlichen Sektor der einzelnen Länder und deren Bevölkerungen.
Wie die Herausgeberin Nadine Vivier in ihrer Einleitung skizziert, basieren die Beiträge auf einem gemeinsamen Forschungsprogramm, so dass im Kern ähnliche Fragestellungen – wie die nach dem jeweiligen Anlass der Enqueten, der Zusammensetzung der leitenden Kommissionen, den Ergebnissen und ihrer Verwertung – verfolgt wurden, ein Konzept, das glücklicherweise im Wesentlichen auch durchgehalten worden ist. Die Beiträge sind grob chronologisch gegliedert, was zur Folge hat, dass mehrere auf ein Land bezogene Beiträge mitunter recht weit auseinanderstehen. Die Kürze der Beiträge erlaubte es meist leider nicht, tiefer in die Details der Enqueten zu gehen – was vielleicht nicht unbedingt ein Nachteil ist: Denn wo dies doch geschieht, wird schnell klar, dass ohne detaillierte Kenntnisse der jeweiligen komplexen agrarhistorischen Rahmenbedingungen in den verschiedenen Staaten auch die Untersuchungsergebnisse kaum verständlich sind.
Ein erster, von Ute Schneider beigesteuerter Beitrag behandelt keine eigene Enquete, sondern zeichnet, ausgehend von einer Bestandsaufnahme des Präsidenten der Landwirtschaftskammer Braunschweig kurz nach der Wende zum 20. Jahrhundert, die Entwicklung der landwirtschaftlichen Enqueten in Deutschland in ihrer Beziehung zur Landwirtschaftsstatistik nach. Der Beitrag geht dafür bis in die 1840er-Jahre zurück, als im deutschsprachigen Kontext das Verhältnis von zahlenbasierter staatlicher Statistik und qualitativ ausgerichteten Enqueten, die zudem nicht von staatlicher Seite initiiert worden sein mussten, intensiv diskutiert wurde. Schließlich geht Schneider im zweiten Teil auf die Diskussionen des ersten Internationalen Statistischen Kongresses (1853) ein, der neben vielen anderen Themen auch die Frage der Landwirtschaftsstatistik behandelte. Zwar geht es in diesem Abschnitt in der Tat eher um statistische Fragen; gleichwohl werden Grundprobleme der Befragung der ländlichen Bevölkerung erkennbar, die auch für die Enqueten eine Rolle spielten.
Einen unübersehbaren Schwerpunkt des Bandes bieten verschiedene Enqueten, die im Vereinigten Königreich von Großbritannien und Irland vorgenommen worden sind. Den Anfang macht Peter Gray mit einem Beitrag zu Enqueten in Irland zwischen 1833 und 1880 und betont hier den Ursprung dieser Unternehmen in den unübersehbaren Problemen der von Armut geplagten irischen Landbevölkerung, auch schon vor der Hungerkatastrophe der 1840er-Jahre. Besonderes

Gewicht legt er auf die methodischen Lernprozesse, die sich im Verlauf mehrerer Enqueten entwickelten, gerade wenn es darum ging, die Bevölkerung selbst ausführlich zu Wort kommen zu lassen. Unverkennbar stärker beherrscht von der schwierigen Situation der Landwirtschaft in ganz Europa seit den 1870er-Jahren waren auch zwei Enqueten königlicher Kommissionen zwischen 1879 und 1897, denen sich Robert M. Schwartz zuwendet. Zwar ergaben die Befragungen auch hier (wie in den übrigen Fällen für Sozialhistoriker interessantes) umfangreiches Material und umfassende Bestandsaufnahmen; schon die Zusammensetzung der Kommissionen, in denen die landbesitzende Elite prominent vertreten war, stellte jedoch sicher, dass die Ergebnisse grundlegende Veränderungen in den Besitzverhältnissen der britischen Landwirtschaft nicht nahelegten. Immerhin machte das umfangreiche Material deutlich, dass die Situation der Landwirtschaft in Großbritannien nicht generell schwierig war: Vor allem die Getreidewirtschaft litt, während sich die Weidewirtschaft gut behaupten konnte. Zu kritisieren ist an diesen beiden Beiträgen allenfalls, dass sie manchmal Detailkenntnisse der irischen und englischen Landwirtschaftspolitik sowie der komplizierten Besitzrechte voraussetzen, ohne die die knapp referierten Ergebnisse der Enqueten kaum verständlich sind. Ein weiterer Aufsatz zur „Royal Commission on Labour" der 1890er-Jahre (Nicola Verdon) rundet die Behandlung des Vereinigten Königreiches ab.

Sowohl das Potential als auch (indirekt) die kleineren Defizite dieses Bandes werden am deutlichsten, wenn man den ausgezeichneten Beitrag von Jonathan J. Liebowitz zur französischen parlamentarischen Enquete von 1884 liest. Zum einen untersucht er knapp, aber klar strukturiert die Zusammenhänge der Enquete mit der wechselhaften und im Untersuchungszeitraum krisenhaften Agrarkonjunktur. Sodann beleuchtet er – was sonst leider nur selten geschieht – transnationale Transfers, hier die Beeinflussung der französischen Befragungen durch britische Enqueten, die zuvor stattgefunden hatten. Allerdings geschieht dies, ohne auf die immerhin drei Beiträge zum Vereinigten Königreich Bezug zu nehmen, und auch auf die französische Agrarenquete von 1866, zu der von der Herausgeberin Vivier ein Aufsatz beigesteuert wurde, verweist er nur knapp auf der vorletzten Seite. (Allerdings lotet die Herausgeberin in ihrer Einleitung die wechselseitigen Bezüge der verschiedenen Enqueten aufeinander zumindest ansatzweise aus). Sehr positiv ist dagegen zu vermerken, dass er so deutlich wie kaum ein anderer Beitrag die Frage nach dem methodisch überhaupt erreichbaren Realitätsbezug solcher umfangreicher Befragungen stellt. In der Tat: Wie hätten normale Landarbeiter die Zeit erübrigen sollen, 196 detaillierte Fragen nach ihren Lebens- und Arbeitsumständen zu beantworten (S. 182)? Insofern verhilft gerade dieser Beitrag zu einem angemessenen Eindruck von den tatsächlichen Abläufen einer solchen Enquete – denn realistischerweise wurden diese Fragenkataloge doch eher von den Bürgermeistern beantwortet. Dass die meisten der vielen tausend ausgefüllten Fragebögen nie gelesen oder gar ausgewertet wurden, ist schon angesichts der schieren Masse an Papier ein überzeugender Befund. Schließlich verdeutlicht gerade dieser Beitrag das komplizierte Verhältnis der Enqueten zur amtlichen Statistik, die schon etwas früher eine unverkennbare Professionalisierung erfahren hatte: Insbesondere verweist Liebowitz darauf, dass die Kommissionsmitglieder der Enquete von 1884 auch auf die regelmäßig erhobenen Statistiken zurückgriffen, ja mehr noch: Die Enquete selbst erhob auch Zahlenmaterial und erwies sich somit als ein Hybrid zwischen einer reinen zahlenbasierten Statistik und einer umfassenden qualitativen Umfrage.

Einer dieser Enquete vorgelagerten Untersuchung aus der zweiten Hälfte der 1860er-Jahre widmet sich Nadine Vivier, die damit den interessanten Zeitraum des französischen Empire während einer beginnenden Agrardepression und dem Zusammenbruch des Zweiten Kaiserreichs im Krieg von 1870/71 behandelt. Die Niederlage gegenüber den deutschen Truppen und der damit einhergehende Staatsumbau hatte allerdings auch zur Folge, dass die umfangreichen Ergebnisse dieser Enquete von der Politik nicht mehr rezipiert wurden.

In Italien diente die untersuchte Enquete der 1870er/80er-Jahre dazu, nicht so sehr auf eine unmittelbare Agrarkrise zu antworten, sondern die Ursachen für sozialen Aufruhr bis hin zu Streiks

unter den Landarbeitern zu erkunden. Allerdings führte die Zusammensetzung der Untersuchungskommission (hauptsächlich reiche Landbesitzer) dazu, dass eher agrarökonomische Fragen im Mittelpunkt standen, nicht so sehr soziale Fragen. Diese umfassende Befragung, die bis zur Fertigstellung 1885 acht Jahre benötigte, war offenbar stärker als andere Erhebungen in Europa statistisch ausgerichtet und trug umfangreiches Tabellenmaterial zusammen – dass wichtige Werke zur italienischen amtlichen Statistik nicht rezipiert werden, verwundert daher.[1] Hilfreich ist dieser Beitrag freilich andererseits, als er den Hintergrund der Autoren der veröffentlichten Zusammenstellungen, die nicht selten agrarwissenschaftlich oder ökonomisch vorgebildet waren, intensiv beleuchtet. Gegenüber den Ergebnissen der Enquete ist die Autorin kritisch, nachdem Landbesitzer häufig nicht daran interessiert waren, wichtige Informationen preiszugeben – aus Furcht vor Steuererhöhungen (ein Problem, das sich im Übrigen im 19. Jahrhundert durchgängig bei staatlichen Erhebungen findet). Die Ergebnisse dieser umfassenden Untersuchung lassen viele strukturelle Unterschiede zwischen einem auch in der Agrarwirtschaft fortschrittlicheren Norden und einem strukturschwächeren Süden erkennen, auch wenn dieses Urteil nicht durchgängig gilt. Offenbar hatte jedoch diese Enquete, wie andere auch, wenig politische Wirkung, da ihre Veröffentlichung bereits in die Zeit der Agrardepression fiel, die dann die Rahmenbedingungen nochmals gründlich änderte. Insofern sind die Ergebnisse dieser Enquete – dieser Befund schimmert auch in anderen Beiträgen immer wieder durch – eher für die Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte interessant.

Auf wenn im Rahmen dieser Rezension nicht alle Beiträge gewürdigt werden können – behandelt werden neben den vorgestellten Staaten auch noch das Osmanische Reich, Ungarn, Spanien, Dänemark, die Niederlande, Kanada und Mexico (leider nicht die USA) –, so lässt sich doch abschließend festhalten, dass es sich hier um einen interessanten Sammelband handelt, der ungeachtet einiger Defizite ein wichtiges und bislang zu wenig untersuchtes Forschungsfeld umreißt.

Anmerkung:

[1] Silvana Patriarca, *Numbers and nationhood. Writing statistics in nineteenth-century Italy*, New York 1996.