

que la révolte des Provençaux contre les Arnulfiens n'en est pas une de Gallo-Romains opposées aux Francs, mais plutôt d'une partie de l'aristocratie franque elle-même (associée à la Neustrie) contre les prétentions hégémoniques de clans austrasiens; ce faisant, Geary s'inscrit en faux contre certaines tendances contemporaines de l'histoire régionale, pour ne pas dire régionaliste. Du côté de l'histoire économique, l'auteur a remarqué que plusieurs chercheurs importants se sont ignorés mutuellement; il s'est donc livré à un nouvel effort de synthèse sur des questions aussi classiques — et redoutables — que celles du manse, du régime dit domanial ou de l'exercice de l'autorité publique sur le monde rural. Il aurait pu pousser plus loin en intégrant dans son bagage de lectures telles études récentes de Jean Durliat et d'Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier, malheureusement absentes de sa bibliographie.

Pour l'édition du testament, Geary a choisi de respecter scrupuleusement le manuscrit unique du XII^e siècle plutôt que les règles usuelles en la matière. N'ayant pas accès au manuscrit, le soussigné ne peut juger de la fidélité de la transcription; mais la multitude des fautes et incorrections typographiques dans le reste du volume donne des inquiétudes quant à la précision de détail. La traduction enfin présentait des difficultés ardues, et les solutions adoptées ne constituent parfois qu'une interprétation qui continuera à s'affiner avec le temps. Est-il judicieux de rendre *servus* tantôt par serviteur, tantôt par esclave (alinéa 40)? Le mot *ratio* désigne-t-il vraiment un testament (page 52, note 96)? La proximité des mots *capitularius* et *inpensio* aux alinéas 19-20 et 23 incite à penser ici à un élément de la fiscalité (autres occurrences aux alinéas 40 et 49).

La distribution spatiale des biens fonciers énumérés dans le testament est donnée par un ensemble de cartes (non numérotées), dont aucune n'indique l'emplacement de Novalèse. Faute d'avoir reçu les instructions appropriées, l'ordinateur chargé de compiler l'index (peu fiable) n'a pas su établir un ordre alphabétique cohérent. Mais ce document exceptionnel qu'est le testament d'Abbon méritait assurément un traitement spécial; grâce à cette édition, commentée de façon érudite, les chercheurs auront désormais la tâche facilitée.

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James R. Gibson — *Farming the Frontier: The Agricultural Opening of the Oregon Country 1786-1846*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985. Pp. x, 265.

Professor Gibson's comprehensive inquiry into the role of agriculture in early Oregon history uncovers a bountiful harvest of anecdotes and facts hitherto ignored. Gibson's efforts to collect and present this mountain of information deserve the utmost praise from the community of researchers involved in the history of the Northwest Coast of North America. This book goes far beyond Oregon's own fascinating past. His work reveals the valued perspectives of the historical geographer, and supplements, on the agricultural side, the classic work of Professor Donald Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain; a Historical Geography, 1805-1910*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968).

Gibson's extensive use of tables and charts provides helpful aids for interpreting otherwise cumbersome information. The charts are not undigested data, for Gibson with discriminating thoroughness evaluates the information. Gibson possesses a distracting penchant for quoting at length but, generally speaking, anyone interested in the early agricultural ventures in the Oregon Country can readily sift through the information presented.

Nonetheless, there are instances where *Farming the Frontier* falls short of a faultless book. He is rather critical of other historians' research, not always with the necessary critical analysis. He also tends to regard the Hudson's Bay Company archival records as the "bible" of Oregon Country agricultural history. More emphasis on North West Company farming techniques and capabilities

would have been salutary. Doubtless the Hudson's Bay Company Archives formed the basis for the most comprehensive record of costs, manpower, profits and productivity. Yet missionaries' records, the personal journals of farmers and their families, and the documents of politicians are, likewise, valuable pieces of evidence.

It is odd, that when such a large portion of his book is devoted to the development of agriculture by missionaries, the Whitmans' demise is not given more attention. Gibson refers, in three rather brief instances, to the "Whitman Massacre". The reader expects and deserves a more detailed reference in the notes section of the book. Avoiding an explanation requires the reader to search out the particulars in other sources.

Gibson presents a strong case to prove that agriculture played a definitive role in the Oregon boundary dispute between 1818 and 1846. The fur trade's once profitable monopoly in the Oregon Country was losing its stronghold. Syphilis, tuberculosis, smallpox, and influenza wiped out entire Indian villages and, in consequence, drastically decreased the number of fur suppliers. Also, as more settlers began to clear land for agricultural pursuits, the beaver lost its home. It became quite evident to the Hudson's Bay Company fur traders and the farmers that their respective livelihoods were incompatible with one another. However owing to the size of the territory and to the small numbers of farmers, there was room enough for both to function.

On this valuable point Gibson wisely makes it quite clear that "it was not farming and fur trading *per se* that clashed; rather, it was the freehold form and the company's monopoly" (p. 189). The Hudson's Bay Company, by its charter, faced no competition in Rupert's Land, but that charter had no effect at warding off competition in the unincorporated Oregon Country. The United States was regarded as a potential threat to the exclusive privileges the Company so relished.

The Hudson's Bay Company hoped to expand and diversify its operations in the Oregon Country long before the crisis which climaxed in 1846. In 1838 the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company was formed to be the means of cattle-raising and settlement. According to John S. Galbraith, author of *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1959), it was hoped that this subsidiary would flourish and thus increase the awareness in people that farming and stock-raising were lucrative possibilities in the Oregon territory. Settlers from England and Scotland were sought by the Company because Americans were pushing north in strong numbers. A counterweight of British settlers would demonstrate to the United States that Britain was well aware of her agricultural abilities and that she intended to protect them.

Unfortunately the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company was inducing would-be settlers with gimmicks. They wanted the settlers firstly to lease the land from the Company and secondly, to hand over one-half of what they reaped as payment. This plan was no bargain. It denied settlers freedom for owning the land they worked. Few settlers from Britain came. Canadian settlers and Americans who did go suffered losses from wild cattle, sick sheep and a poor export market in wool, beef and tallow. As a result, Gibson and Galbraith concluded that the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company was both an economic and political failure.

As American and British citizens learned of the prosperous reputation of the Willamette Valley, more and more farmers and their families migrated there to test their agricultural skills. American settlers eventually outnumbered the British by almost five to one in 1845. British settlers coming from Britain or eastern Canada shared the view that the beauty and fertility of Oregon did not compensate for the hardship of travel and time involved in reaching the area; moreover the British Empire offered many fetching alternatives for pioneer agriculturalists.

By 1844 the Americans had gained a "respectable footing" in the Willamette Valley. In these circumstances Britain was fortunate, Gibson suggests, not to lose more of the land than she did in the Oregon Settlement of 1846. Even then, Gibson regrets that Canada should have lost an area that the British agent of North America, the Hudson's Bay Company, once held as virtually its own. The British government seemed apathetic and disinterested in the value of the territory, while on the other

hand the Americans realized the richness of the land and made every effort to protect their existing settlements and extend them even farther north.

James Gibson must be given credit for exploring an area of great interest to students of western North American history. Other historians have written books concerning the Oregon territory, but their interests have concentrated on the historical and political avenues, while Gibson devotes his research and writing to the agricultural aspects, with a geographical frame of mind. This is a book long awaited, but well worth the wait.

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Daniel Hickey — *The Coming of French Absolutism: The Struggle for Tax Reform in the Province of Dauphiné, 1540-1640*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. Pp. xii, 273.

This book joins a growing number of studies which reinterpret early-modern French absolutism in terms of the relations between the central monarchy and individual provinces. Dauphiné has always stood out as an interesting case because its unique *taille* controversy brought into view the fundamental interests and antagonisms of the various groups that struggled and negotiated with the crown, offering a public debate on privilege and equality that was unprecedented before the eighteenth century. Readers may recall Davis Bitton's use of published tracts from this affair in his discussion of the crisis of the nobility. The same issues formed the backdrop to the violent struggles in Le Roy Ladurie's *Carnival of Romans*. Now Daniel Hickey has produced a lucid, in-depth study of the *taille* controversy itself.

Dauphiné was the only province whose estates were successfully replaced with royal *élections* in 1628 and the only area to be transformed from the regime of *taille personnelle* (tax exemption based on personal nobility) to *taille réelle* (tax exemption based on the status of the land being taxed). These changes were the culmination of a century of agitation by towns and villages overburdened with the exemptions of the privileged. The author, who originally wrote a dissertation on the socio-economic structures of the Valentinois-Diois region, has used the reform issue as a narrative framework to which he attaches selected data from his investigations into social realities on the local level.

Hickey shows the interrelationship of three separate issues. First was the question of whether town residents purchasing rural lands had to pay their *taille* in the villages where the lands were situated. If not, such purchases increased the tax burden on other local taxpayers. Second was the problem of who was exempted by law from paying taxes at all. Third was the issue of whether such problems would be resolved in the province or by the central government. All three questions were reopened every time the tax burden became especially heavy. In 1548 a royal ruling established the principle that non-exempt townspeople paid for their rural lands in the villages where the lands were situated. In 1554, 1556, and 1579 rulings by the Estates and the Crown confirmed the exemptions of nobles, clerics, and many officers. Urban notables who paid taxes now had an interest in joining with the villages in opposing privileged exemptions, and once launched they might oppose the privileges themselves or the *taille personnelle* which allowed privileged exemptions to be extended to new parcels of land. But the violent peasant and artisan uprisings in 1579-80, including the "carnival of Romans", discredited the movement and embarrassed elite leaders of the Third Estate. When taxes again peaked in the 1590s, the towns took the lead from the villages and began a major legal offensive, emboldened by the belligerence of the privileged orders. A royal edict in 1602 made some concessions but again ratified privileged exemptions. Then followed a period of further lobbying in which the Crown, pressed for money, intervened more and more frequently to regulate village