

to an exodus of bright students to the continent and to Scotland. Oxbridge meanwhile continued to base its training on book-learning. Dissection was frowned upon; instead reliance continued to be placed on tried and untrue (and painful) remedies — purges, vomits and bloodlettings.

The sclerotic attitudes of Oxbridge and the Royal College left an opening through which apothecaries and surgeons were not slow to step. The rise of apothecaries (ancestors of the modern G.P.) was encouraged by 1) the fact that most people could not afford physicians' fees; 2) the voyages of discovery, as well as peace with Spain after 1604, which led to the preparation of a vast new menu of exotic drugs from the east, including many pain-killing palliatives; and 3) the plague of 1665 when most physicians fled London, while most apothecaries stayed, "gaining in abundance both patients and general admiration" (p. 185). In a landmark ruling by the House of Lords in 1704 apothecaries won the right to charge for giving medical advice as well as selling drugs. This ruling established their status as doctors.

Surgeons rose even higher from lowlier social origins. Tracing their descent from medieval barbers they gradually added the setting of broken limbs, pulling teeth, and the treatment of venereal disease to their repertoire. Frequent warfare from the 1650s onward furnished ample opportunity to hone their skills. But their full flowering had to await the development of the science of anatomical dissection after 1700. Then Surgeons' Hall and the sixteen new eighteenth-century London hospitals blossomed as teaching centres. Cutting for kidney stones seems to have become the favourite operation of the eighteenth century. Holmes challenges the dismal assessment of Thomas McKeown as to the effectiveness of doctors in healing illness before the nineteenth century, concluding that "surgeons of late-Augustan England were, at their best, the most persuasive of all ambassadors for medicine as a profession." It cannot be denied that sensitive medical practitioners have at all times done a great deal to relieve distress, and even effect cures, but McKeown is probably right that the medical profession had minimal impact on human mortality figures before the introduction of the "miracle" drugs 40 to 50 years ago. Furthermore, it would have been appropriate for Holmes to acknowledge the point made by Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, that even as late as the early eighteenth century the "cunning folk" of rural England probably accomplished more healing and relief of pain than all the physicians, surgeons and apothecaries put together, and at a fraction of the cost.

These minor reservations apart, the book can be recommended as offering a convincing argument for the dynamism and intellectual creativity of Augustan England, and as an illuminating contribution to the social history of that half-century.

Ian GENTLES
Glendon College/York University

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GREGOR DALLAS — *The Imperfect Peasant Economy: The Loire Country, 1800-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Pp. xiv, 352.

In the 1920s a Russian economist, Alexandr Vasilevich Chayanov, published a book based on data assembled by agricultural specialists working for the pre-revolutionary *zemstva*. Chayanov's *Theory of Peasant Economy* argued that peasant behaviour could not properly be understood by using the concepts of marginal analysis. Peasant farmers, he concluded, did not look upon their labour as a variable cost, nor did they set output targets as a function

of relative prices. Rather, peasant households sought first and foremost to produce enough to meet a standard of subsistence defined by custom; while pursuing this goal family labour inputs were just not governed by any notion of declining marginal productivity of labour.

Chayanov's theory was a work of scholarship but it was also a contribution to the Soviet leadership's intense debate on agricultural policy. His arguments were good ammunition for the side that ultimately lost this debate, so the *Theory of Peasant Economy* had no future in Stalin's Russia. But Chayanov's views were to have much influence among western scholars who, like the author of the study here under review, find congenial his proposition that the categories of conventional economic theory are inappropriate to the analysis of peasant society.

What is "imperfect" in the peasant economy Gregor Dallas has studied with such care is its deviation from the pure "labour-consumer balance" — the trade-off between drudgery and subsistence — which lies at the core of Chayanov's analysis. French peasants in the Loire valley often worked part-time for others; and the more prosperous among them hired agricultural labourers as part-time field hands. Thus the French peasant household was not always the self-contained labour unit of Chayanov's model. This does not bother Dallas, and rightly so; as he says, "the task is less one of defining an all-embracing, universal system than of finding the most suitable logic for describing an imperfect reality." (p. 39) Agreed — so long as we understand him really to mean "the logic that deforms real-world experience the least": for it is not reality that is "imperfect", but rather the general concepts we inevitably must use to make comparative research and communication among specialists possible.

Dallas draws from an array of archival data — cadastral surveys, registers of vital statistics, police records, town council minutes — deployed in an impressive set of tables and graphs to contrast the roles played by Nantes and Orléans, the two principal big towns, in influencing the behaviour of the peasant agriculturalists of the Loire valley. He maintains from the start that the impetus for change derived from conditions in the countryside (chiefly the changing ratio of people to land); and that the city was an agent of change only in so far as its specific economic character opened certain choices — or foreclosed on others — that might allow the peasant household new ways of attaining the labour-consumer balance. As it turned out, Orléans functioned as a typical market town, centralizing the commercialization of regional agricultural surplus. In contrast, the position of Nantes as an important seaport allowed the emergence of a sector that serviced external trade as well as regional commerce. Dallas finds that the "dual orientation" of Nantes provided peasants of the Nantais with more options for the household to take advantage of, notably local exchange possibilities arising out of the fact that Nantes never fully captured the regional flow of goods to the extent that Orléans apparently did. But in the author's view both regions permitted the survival of the peasant economy as it is here defined.

Social historians are bound to appreciate the subtle analysis Dallas brings to the differential effects of economic changes on family structure in the Orléanais and the Nantais. He goes beyond the usual demographic profiles to present an analysis of generational ties within the household and with household members drawn from outside the nuclear family. There are also interesting sections on collective violence and the role of rival rural élites, chiefly priests and schoolteachers, and how their relative influence might be correlated to the characteristics of each region. But here the difficulty of excluding other variables makes this analysis problematic — a point implicitly conceded in the author's sensible reflections on the role of chance and "historical accident" in social change.

Economic historians will be more interested to learn that the expected reaction of peasant households under demographic pressure — i.e. increased effort at the intensive margin — gave way after the 1860s to strategies of extensive cultivation, with trends towards livestock raising and grain-growing, less *morcellement* and more rural emigration. When

one combines these changes with the author's admission (p. 261) that peasant households in the Loire valley were by now taking advantage of the national market network, one has to wonder how helpful the peasant economy paradigm remains. Are these still peasants simply commercializing the surplus that a good year brings? Or are they increasingly like farmers making production decisions in response to market signals? What is involved here is a gradient, not an all-or-nothing choice; however, Dallas's data on crops, which reveal a new emphasis on the potato, strongly suggest the survival of a self-sufficiency mentality.

I have to register a complaint of style and one of substance. Sometimes Dallas's writing is self-conscious to the point of distraction. A taste for the grandiose ("the ongoing historical project") rubs elbows with social-science kitsch ("my analysis of the social whole"). There is even drama where one would least expect to encounter it: would you call the opposition between sociology's static models and history's preoccupation with change "a ghastly dilemma"? This is too bad because most of his book is well-written, with no lack of apposite metaphor and helpful analogy.

As for substance, I believe economic historians should protest vigorously against the author's conflation of "the classic economic approach" (p. 38) with "contemporary economic theory", which, in Dallas's view, "makes the market its sole frame of reference" (p. 25) and whose practitioners "do not study decision-making strategies" (p. 292, n. 11). To say this is to ignore almost two decades of scholarly attention to institutional and non-market factors as determinants of economic behaviour. One has to wonder if there is any real live exemplar of "contemporary economic theory" who would fit Dallas's relative-prices-tell-us-all-we-need-to-know caricature. In actual fact, theories of risk aversion, its relation to forms of tenancy, crop-selection and market-orientation (i.e. "decision-making strategies") have been argued back and forth by economists and economic historians. Moreover these theoretical debates are not tucked away in the specialist economics journals; they are readily accessible in recent historical studies dealing with peasant societies under pressure (e.g. Jan de Vries on Holland, Michelle McAlpin on India, and too many to name on the U.S. South). Dallas could have profited by consulting such studies, for they are concerned with the same issues he addresses and could have provided him with potentially useful insights. As just one example, Dallas's discussion of peasant handicrafts would not have been hurt by a look at the "F/Z goods" trade-off model proposed by Hymer and Resnick and utilized by de Vries. In short, Dallas's fine book could have been even better had his comparative reading in economic history been as wide as it appears to have been in anthropology.

E.P. FITZGERALD
Carleton University

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CHRISTINE PIETTE — *Les Juifs de Paris (1808-1840) : la marche vers l'assimilation*. Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1983. Pp. 211.

This short, businesslike monograph offers an excellent social portrait of Parisian Jews in the half-century after Jewish emancipation. Christine Piette of the University of Laval probes the degree of social integration into French society of this small community, which grew from only 800 persons in 1791 to about 9,000 in 1840. To provide answers, she draws upon a wide range of archival sources, reaching far beyond the records of the Jewish community itself. Following the research agenda of some distinguished French scholars, particularly Adeline Daumard, Piette makes good use of notarial archives, *déclarations de décès et de succession*, electoral lists, and census material. Similarly, she rummages con-