David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985. Pp. xxiv, 404.

When *Les Toscans et leurs familles* first appeared in 1978, it was immediately hailed as a major contribution to two previously disparate fields: historical demography and Renaissance studies. David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber had selected a marvelous source—the registers of the Florentine *catasto* of 1427, which recorded in minute detail the tax declarations of Florence and its subject territories—and applied to this source all the conceptual and mechanical tools of systematic statistical analysis. They described the political and fiscal setting in which the *catasto* was created, the values and limits of the data it contains, and the methods they used to examine that data. They considered the distribution of wealth, population movements, birth rates, mortality, age distribution, marital patterns, life stages, residential units, gender imbalances, and more. They laid out their results in 39 graphs, 85 tables, 69 maps, and over 600 pages of lucidly written text.

The publication of an English version, *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427*, in hardcover (1985) and in paperback (1989), spurs reflection on the lasting value of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's work. The English version is less dauntingly monumental: the number of graphs, tables, and maps has been reduced, the appendices have been eliminated, and the text has been shortened by a third. It is also more precisely focussed on matters of historical demography, where the authors made their most original and most enduring contribution. For the English version they have sharply reduced their discussion of fiscal politics and the making of the *catasto*, the geographical distribution of the population, the distribution of wealth between urban and rural areas and among different segments of the population, and literary images of infancy, childhood, maturity, and old age. In contrast, they have retained in their fullness the chapters devoted to men and women, young and old, marriage, births, death, and household structure—in short, the hard core of demographic data.

Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber have demonstrated beyond any doubt the utility of the computer in collating and manipulating this data, gathered from scores of volumes registering the depositions of some 60,000 heads of households, regarding over 260,000 persons. They have devised ingenious ways of overcoming in part the synchronic nature of this mountain of data, which was compiled in a remarkably brief span of time, and extending their analysis over several generations to demonstrate the perduring consequences of episodic outbreaks of plague. They have conscientiously described in quantitative terms poor as well as rich families, rural as well as urban; within those families they have paid as much heed to women, children, and the aged as to adult males. Because the thoroughness, thoughtfulness, and care with which Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber analyze the *catasto* matches that with which the *catasto* was created, the scope, detail,

and insight of *Tuscans and Their Families* is likely to remain without parallel as a study of premodern population.

Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's contribution to the field of early modern history has been equally important. They have provided an inescapable quantitative framework for all future studies of fifteenth-century Florentine society. This is most obviously true for the flourishing sub-field of family studies: future examinations of the particular marriage strategies and household arrangements of specific families or lineages will inevitably consider them in the context of the global figures provided by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, just as studies of the social and demographic structure of other Quattrocento cities will take the Florentine pattern elucidated here as a secure reference point. But Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's data also provide a framework for Bernardino of Siena's sermons on marriage and household, Giovanni Dominici's treatise on family management and childrearing, and Boccaccio's stories of adultery. Provocative hypotheses are advanced here (and will no doubt be tested elsewhere) about the connections between the advanced age at which Florentine men married and the incidence of violence, prostitution, and sodomy in Florence; between the striking concentration of wealth in the hands of a very few leading families and humanist praise of munificence; between fiscal exemptions and the building of elegant and richly furnished palaces and villas.

When Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber move from headcounts to culture, however, their achievement appears more equivocal, and not simply because it is hard to document clear causal connections between demographic data and cultural ethos, fiscal policies and artistic production, quantities of lives and quality of life. In fact, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber generally do a persuasive job of suggesting linkages, and the passages in which they suggest them are among the most stimulating (if least conclusive) ones in the book. At issue is a broader and subtler problem: the intellectual confusion that has beset the concept of "the Renaissance" as a result of the rise of social history.

Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber bear no direct responsibility for this confusion. For the most part, they carefully avoid using the term "the Renaissance," preferring instead neutral chronological designations such as "the fifteenth century." Their terminological care is laudable, for their informative discussion of demographic characteristics, social distinctions, and the distribution of wealth has nothing to do with any turning to classical antiquity for inspiration or exemplars. Was there a Renaissance fiscal household consciously crafted on the model of republican or imperial Rome? Was there a Renaissance family, a Renaissance dowry, or birthrate, or senescence? Clearly, when "the Renaissance" is stretched this far, it loses all value as a heuristic category. And that is the disquieting legacy of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's magnificent achievement. So long as less reflective historians casually equate the fifteenth century with the Renaissance and extend a designation suitable for cultural and intellec-

tual developments to include *all* aspects of the period from Petrarch to Castiglione—so long, in short, as *Tuscans and Their Families* is hailed as “a major contribution to Renaissance studies”—“the Renaissance” will be merely a conventional label, employed out of intellectual inertia though devoid of any coherent sense.

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