Christiane Klapisch-Zuber. *Retour à la Cité: Le Magnats de Florence 1340–1440.*

Paris: Éditions École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2006. 520 pp. index. tbls. bibl. €40. ISBN: 2–7132–2072–6.

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber has packed several careers into one. A meticulous scholar, she has investigated an array of topics, mainly Florentine. She began with a study of the Carrara marble works in 1969, yet within ten years she was coauthor, with David Herlihy, of a landmark demographic and economic study of Tuscany, based on analysis of the Florentine *catasto* of 1427. She then turned her attention to more discursive sources, mainly *ricordanze*, and mined them in a succession of brilliant essays. Many of these have been gathered in English (1985), Italian (1988), French (1990), and German (1995). These set her reputation as a leading scholar of the family and of women's history.

Retour à la Cité is thus the work of a masterful scholar making yet another career move. The Florentine magnates have been studied from their origins as a

disenfranchised violent group in the magisterial works of Gaetano Salvemini and Nicola Ottokar, and by more recent figures. Klapisch-Zuber picks up where others leave off, tracing the magnate lineages to the early days of Medici ascendancy, when the category of magnate was effectively emptied of most of its denizens, though not its meaning. What Klapisch-Zuber finds most interesting in this later period is the rehabilitation of magnate lineages in the anthropologically charged moment of changing names and symbols of family identity. This, she avows, is her point of entry.

Twelve chapters are evenly divided among three parts. The first, "Circonscrire, définir," goes over the legal definition of the magnates, drawing vital distinctions between those of the city and those of the *contado*. Fiscal records loom large here, but Klapisch-Zuber also uses records of the oaths of surety required of magnates to determine their ever-diminishing numbers and wealth. What also diminished, Klapisch-Zuber finds in her fourth chapter, was their hauteur and violent demeanor, although she does not venture to investigate any broader civilizing process that may have been at work.

The second part, "Contrôler," rests on judicial and legislative sources. Following the interlude of the rule of Walter of Brienne (1342–43), who tried to establish social peace and bring magnates back into the city's political class, the regime of the Guelf *popolo* tried to restrain the prepotent lineages of city and *contado*. Among the means of control was provision for a magnate to pass into the ranks of the *popolo*. This reward for peaceable behavior demanded symbolic rejection of kin and class solidarity. In her analysis of divisions of magnate lineages, Klapisch-Zuber makes clear that, contrary to positions advanced by Marvin Becker and Gene Brucker, "at no point in the history of the magnates did the fact of renouncing one's kinship, name, and coat of arms result in automatic *popularitas*. It was the opposite that is regularly verified" (213). The seventh chapter, "Une politique des signes," is the heart of the book. Here Klapisch-Zuber traces how *popolani* branches of lineages such as the Gherardini, Squarcialupi, Tornaquinci, and Visdomini maintained ties of solidarity with their magnate kin. The government could also move people in the other direction, creating a category of neomagnates on petition of *popolani* who sought to disable political enemies on grounds of excessively violent, magnate-like behavior.

Part 3, "S'adapter, s'insérer," considers the rationale by which Florentines sought to break free of kin whose political, criminal, or financial dealings threatened them. "The tenacious persistence of ties of kinship" (333) in reality limited the effects of the legal fictions ex-magnates embraced. In time rehabilitated magnates appeared in offices. Some Bardi, Tornabuoni, and others were to enjoy political good fortune with the Medici. Klapisch-Zuber mines *tratte* and other records for statistical evidence of increasing magnate participation in officeholding, but here, as elsewhere throughout the book, accompanies the numbers with carefully drawn examples. The final chapter considers the classic dilemma for the would-be noble — sword or shop — while drawing attention to the category of

miles populi, by which one could act the part of the noble warrior but retain identification with the *popolo*.

It is clear that "anti-magnate legislation does not seem to have been as ineffective as one had thought" (444). It gave the magnates incentive, matched by generosity on the part of the *popolo*, to reintegrate themselves into the ranks of politically active citizens. The process also involved the government in conceptualization of kinship, rendering yet more fluid the boundary between public and private, where status in the former depended on descent and inheritance in the latter. It is also significant, as Klapisch-Zuber says, that the classification of magnate remained meaningful. It is a category whose history will now ever be before us thanks to a great historian at the peak of her abilities. It is a pity that the realities of academic publishing will probably preclude a translation to put this exemplary scholarship before a wider audience.

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