Received: 28 October 2025 | Revised: 28 October 2025 | Accepted: 11 November 2025

DOI: 10.1111/ehr.70073

THE ECONOMIC HISTORY REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of periodical literature for 2024: 400–1100

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This year's papers cover a range of topics and a wide geographical spread, with studies focusing on Britain, France, Egypt, and China, amongst others. They employ a range of historical, archaeological, and digital humanities methods, with many sharing the common aim of re-evaluating old orthodoxies in the light of new techniques.

We start in China, where Dong and Cheng examine the relationship between religion and science during the Song dynasty (960–1279). Their study revisits the impact of Neo-Confucianism and Chinese scientific achievements in this period and adds to the recent efforts in breaking down the long-held view that Confucian culture hindered science. Their analysis of the stock of scientific and technological works written by Song dynasty scholars demonstrates that there was a considerable scientific output (339 texts) during the period, including works of geography, medicine, agronomy, astronomy, and mathematics. They then carry out a large-scale analysis of the surviving corpus of Neo-Confucian texts, as listed in the *Song Yuan Xue An* (Records of Song and Yuan Scholarship), comprising texts by 193 authors. Their results suggest that there is a strong positive association between the Neo-Confucian spirit and local scientific production, a phenomenon they suggest is amplified by the density of Confucian academies in particular areas. Dong and Cheng conclude that, rather than hindering scientific discovery, the specific form of Neo-Confucianist thought of the Song dynasty played a positive role in the considerable scientific developments of the period.

From China, we move to France, where three papers look at various aspects of secular and ecclesiastical lordship during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Barzilay explores the well-studied phenomena of the rise of local lordship in eleventh-century France – and the 'Peace of God' movements that went along with it – through the perspective and experiences of France's Jewish population. The article focuses primarily on the '1007 Anonymous' account, which describes the persecution of Jews in France at this date and their subsequent protection by the pope. This

was, according to the account, at least partly thanks to the actions of a powerful Jewish lord, Jacob b. Yekutiel, who travelled to Rome to petition for papal protection. Barzilay's analysis examines the dichotomy present in the text and in the social conditions of the time, which meant that Jews were theoretically excluded from holding positions of rulership unless they converted to Christianity, and yet in practice, powerful Jews such as Jacob could and did hold such positions as lords. The article demonstrates that, although Jews could be subject to the harshest treatment if they were to break the 'Peace of God', some Jews were well aware of the language, rituals, and practices associated with lordship and were able to manipulate these to their own advantage and maintain positions of power.

Garipzanov focuses on the ecclesiastical lordship of the bishopric of Laon in the tenth century. The paper does this through an examination of the marginal 'mini-texts' which appear in the blank spaces of Laon Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 424. The manuscript itself is a medical tract, compiled in the ninth century. However, it also features five marginal additions made by the same anonymous scribe, who appears to have been a cleric and accountant in the service of the bishopric of Laon. Garipzanov argues that this 'accountant of Laon' must have had this medical manuscript (borrowed from the cathedral library) with him on his travels as he journeyed to Laon's outlying estates, using its blank spaces to note down snippets of key accounting information to be copied into the official records upon his return. The variety of the five additions reveals the scope of the accountant's responsibilities as well as a great deal about the social and economic life of the bishopric and the communities over which it ruled. Polyptych-style entries include details of cash and in-kind payments owed and paid by individual farms to the bishopric, as well as whether the status of these farms was free or unfree. Lists of names of people inform us of the use of local assemblies, as well as the collection of taxes. The significant quantities of goods, particularly wine, led Garipzanov to suggest that there must have been significant local organization around the transportation of payments in kind from local churches to the city of Laon, as well as some delegation of responsibility to the 'accountant' in the redistribution of goods within the city. An important observation is the apparent transition in tenth-century Laon from payments in-kind to a more regular cash payment system. Although Garipzanov's analysis of the texts is insightful, the inclusion of full transcriptions and translations of the entries is especially useful for future research beyond the scope of what is explored in the article itself.

Laon is also the focus of Vanderputten's article, which explores the Carmen ad Robertum regem (Poem to King Robert) – a letter written from Bishop Adalbero of Laon addressed to the French king, Robert II, sometime between 1023 and 1031. Vanderputten argues that Adalbero's letter should not just be seen as the complaints of a conservative author responding to the 'progressive threats of Cluniac reform', but a 'testimony to the shifting relationship between bishops and monastic communities in late tenth- and early eleventh-century France' (p. 164). In the text, Adalbero combines common tropes to craft a set-piece encounter with a monk-turned-soldier returning from a night's stay with Abbot Odilo of Cluny. Adalbero is offended by the monk's lack of respect for his superiors, but most of all by his rejection of divine law through his wildly inappropriate dress, from his 'large hood made from the skin of a Lybian bear' to the bow and sword hanging from his belt (p. 166). The poem is therefore a clear critique of Odilo, who was unconcerned with upholding moral and behavioural boundaries with the secular world. However, Vanderputten sees it as more than a simple critique of Odilo, and compares the poem with earlier texts, including Abbo of Fleury's Epistola XIV, to show that Adalbero's ultimate aim was to present a wider critique of overmighty abbots, such as Richard of Saint-Vanne and William of Volpiano, who he saw as challenging the traditional role of bishops and forging direct links with sovereigns. Adalbero, therefore, saw monastic overreach as a more widespread condition

that had infected an array of institutions. Vanderputten concludes that the letter is therefore a call from Adalbero to his fellow bishops to restate their authority over the hypocritical monastic leaders, and to correct the disruption to the social order they had caused.

The papers by Hamerow et al. and Haworth and Clarke-Neish take different approaches to examine the position of women in England during the sixth and seventh centuries. Hamerow et al. use evidence from burials to investigate female mobility during the 'Conversion Period' in England (roughly the seventh century). Written evidence (e.g. Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica) suggests that women were often the first members of a family to convert, and that they possessed a special link with the supernatural that was used to legitimize familial claims to land and resources. Although we only have written evidence for a handful of very powerful women from royal households, evidence from a number of particularly ostentatious furnished female burials suggests that this special role was not restricted to royal women. Hamerow et al. use isotopic analysis to test the hypothesis that this phenomenon was linked to the practice of female exogamy – the marrying of female members outside their group/tribes as 'peace pledges' between rival families. The isotopic analysis focuses on 81 burials, comprising both men and women, and compares their regions of origin within the sample and against a larger meta-dataset. The discussion presents several potentially important findings, including that those non-local burials increased significantly during the period AD 630–800, suggesting that mobility, and possibly exogamy, did increase, but that men were in fact slightly more likely than women to have originated from non-local areas. They also find that local women were more likely to have been buried in ways which suggest they were high status, with one cluster of non-local women having probably originated from the 'Atlantic Fringe' (south-west England, Ireland, and coastal areas of Wales), and that women from this cluster were more likely to have been of low status. These findings therefore suggest that – with the exception of royal women – high-profile women accorded extravagant furnished burials in the Conversion Period tended to be of local origin.

Haworth and Clarke-Neish take a fresh look at early medieval coin-pendants – objects of jewellery fashioned from gold coins – in the context of the wider coin economy of the sixth and seventh centuries. Worn almost exclusively by women, these coin-pendants are an important source of information for our understanding of female engagement with the early medieval coin-using economy. Whilst numismatic and archaeological scholarship has tended to differentiate between modified and non-modified coins, with their importance largely stemming from the precious material, Haworth and Clarke-Neish argue that wearers of coin jewellery saw these objects as important because of the prestige attached to coinage. The study suggests that coin-pendants were predominantly used in areas where coins were in use as currency and so must have been worn by women in communities familiar with coins in their unmodified form. Whilst gold was relatively readily available within elite circles, the wearing of modified coins signalled the ability of the wearer to access gold in its coined form and to participate in the coin-based element of a multi-currency economy. The construction of loops or pendant frames necessitated skills that would have enabled a much more significant transformation into a different type of gold object, had it been desired, but the original form of the coin was consciously preserved. This, Haworth and Clarke-Neish explain, reflects a deliberate decision to retain the coin as the object of display, not a technological compromise. Moreover, the fact that some coin-pendants were subsequently prised or clipped from their mount in a seemingly intentional process suggests that they served a secondary purpose as a store of portable wealth that could be returned to circulation if required, indicating that women were able to participate meaningfully in the early medieval coin-using economy.

The article by Kershaw et al. explores the next stage in the development of coinage in north-west Europe: the transition from gold to silver currency from *c*. 660/70. This marked a transformation in the early medieval economy and expanded the use of coined money, and Kershaw et al. explore the possible sources of this newly minted silver. Previous explanations for the sources of this silver have included: the melting down of Roman plate and recycling of Roman scrap metal; imports from Byzantine and/or Islamic worlds; and the mining of silver in Europe, such as the large lead-silver mine at Melle in Aquitaine, France. Kershaw et al. add clarity to this picture by applying combined lead-isotope and trace-element analysis to 49 silver pennies and denarii from England, the Netherlands, and eastern Francia. This relatively small dataset is compared with existing datasets of contemporaneous coinages from Britain, the Frankish Empire, and the Mediterranean. The results show a surge of silver in the period *c*. 660–750, which appears to have originated from the Byzantine Empire and is likely to have been a recycled gilded plate. This suggests that the silver for early coinages was drawn from existing stocks and points to changing attitudes towards the use of precious metal and the decision to mint it. A second phase is outlined from *c*. 750–820, in which finer silver from Frankish sources at Melle permeated stocks across a wide area of north-west Europe, initially combined to a variable extent with other, relic stocks of metal. In Francia, this changed after the 793-coin reform of Charlemagne, which saw more widespread growth of the use of Melle silver across the Carolingian Empire. Kershaw et al. argue that these results demonstrate the firm grip that the Carolingian state had on its currency by the end of the eighth century, but also that the silver from Frankish mines was the dominant source used for coinage across a wider area of north-west Europe from *c*. 750 AD.

Three further archaeological studies investigate the post-Roman period in contrasting regions of the former Empire, with potential consequences for our understanding of the social and economic transition following the fall of the Roman Empire. Brownlee and Klevnäs revisit the debate around the lack of evidence for formal burials in Britain during the fifth century AD. Building on previous studies showing that formal burials remained rare outside urban contexts during the Roman period, the article suggests that the 'missing fifth century' may be explained by the continuation of archaeologically invisible practices amongst the native rural population during this period. The study focuses on evidence from non-cemetery disposals in cave and riverine contexts, with remains radiocarbon-dated to the Roman and early medieval periods. Brownlee and Klevnäs argue that the 26 non-burials examined in the study cannot represent the entirety of non-cemetery disposal, but exemplify specific environments in which practices that are usually archaeologically invisible become visible. They suggest that we should infer from this that a wide spectrum of funerary activity was maintained into the fifth century, much of which will always remain truly invisible. Brownlee and Klevnäs point out that, if locally rooted burial traditions in lowland England do not appear in cemetery-based datasets, then this inevitably introduces bias into any analysis that uses mortuary practices to understand migration and identity around the Adventus Saxonum.

From Britain, we move to Karanis, a Greco-Roman farming village in the Fayum Oasis, Egypt, which is the focus of the article by Motta et al. Karanis offers one of the most extensive datasets available for the study of Roman life, the Roman economy, and the ultimate decline of Roman administration in the region. This new study explores the chronological development of the town and its ultimate abandonment. The timing of this abandonment has particular significance for the understanding of the socioeconomic history of late antiquity and environmental changes affecting the region. Key previous scholarship, based on papyrological and numismatic evidence, has generally argued that the site was depopulated in the fourth century and abandoned by the

fifth. However, a number of recent studies has suggested a more complex picture, with phases of reorganization, modification, and re-inhabitation taking place across a wider timespan.

The archaeobotanical study of Motta et al. supports this reinterpretation, with evidence pointing to continued habitation of the central settlement area, along with expansion and habitation of the east and west suburbs, into the sixth century. They conclude that the settlement not only remained consistently inhabited up to the sixth century, but also appears to have survived in some form up to the period of the Islamic conquest in the seventh century. These findings should provoke a reassessment of the decline of the post-Roman economy of the Fayum region and its integration into the wider agricultural and ecological system.

We return to Britain, where English investigates the chronological and geographic distribution of ivory rings in funerary depositions in lowland Britain between the fifth and seventh centuries. Such rings have often been referred to as long-lived grave goods in early medieval Britain. However, the evidence presented by English suggests that this was not actually the case. On the basis of a corpus of 752 ivory rings from 78 cemeteries, English presents two phases of activity: an early, high-intensity 'introduction' period from *c.* 400/25 to *c.* 475/500 in which the majority of depositions were made within a relatively small area of eastern England around the Wash and the Humber; and a low-intensity 'dispersal period' from *c.* 500 to *c.* 560, in which a far smaller number of depositions were made over a much larger area of lowland eastern England. It is suggested that the ivory rings' depositions in this second phase may have been heirlooms or residual circulation from the 'introduction period'. Rather than a long-lived grave good, English therefore argues for one short and intense period of use and deposition. As English points out, the eastern distribution and rapid rise and fall in the trade of these objects have implications for our understanding of trade networks between Britain, north-west Europe, the Mediterranean, and North Africa.

Our next two articles focus on the tenth century, and both carry out a re-evaluation of texts which inform us of important social and economic relationships. Christensen explores early medieval conceptions of slavery through an exploration of the *Inquisitio de theloneis Raffelstettensis* (the Inquest on the tolls of Raffelstetten) – a record of customs regulations reissued under the East Frankish king, Louis the Child, between 903 and 906, detailing the controls on import and export of enslaved persons. Although it has previously been examined from an economic approach, Christensen revisits the Raffelstetten inquest from a social history perspective and employs a multi-species lens to reconstruct a network in which animals and humans were 'literally and figuratively entangled' during forced migration. The article describes how the physical experiences of human enslaved persons and captured animals collided at different stages of the journey to Raffelstetten, as well as how they shared both corporeal and symbolic connections within the slave market itself. She notes how enslaved persons were grouped together with other 'inseparable goods' such as cattle and horses, for which taxes must be paid in currency, rather than in kind, as was the case for 'separable goods' such as salt and wax. Christensen also notes how the categorization of species became entangled with ideologies of gender at the point of sale, with Raffelstetten regulations stipulating those different taxes were to be levied for the sale of enslaved women or men, and for stallions or mares, with the prices matched along gender lines rather than species.

Kinship is the topic of Traves' article. Like slavery, it is a well-explored area in this period, and several studies explored violence between families and the wergild penalties designed to avoid prolonged feuds as a result. Traves examines the less well-studied phenomenon of the killing of fellow family members, and what contemporary attitudes to this can tell us about kinship more broadly. The silence of the secular law codes on such matters means Traves turns to thoughts of Wulfstan, the eleventh-century Archbishop of York, as well as penitentials, for evidence. As Traves

notes, Wulfstan expressed particular concern about the crime, and suggested there was a conceptual difference between killing family members and non-family members. The guidance in the Scriftboc, the Old English Handbook, and the Old English Penitential similarly advises that more severe penance was due in such cases. Perpetrators were recommended a period of exile, whilst a final decision on the penance due was taken by a bishop or the pope himself. Indeed, Wulfstan's letters record that many penitents were sent on pilgrimages to holy sites, including Rome. These punishments were far harsher than those for simple cases of homicide, and bear a strong resemblance to contemporary penitential prescriptions described in Frankish sources. Traves argues that the harshness of such punishments was required, in part, to plug the legal loophole caused by the presumption in the law codes that killings would take place between members of different families, and therefore compensation would be owed from one family to another. For this, harshness was justified by the fact that close kinship was not just perceived as a carnal relationship, but a sacred one. The murder of close kin, therefore, entailed a powerful social revulsion towards perpetrators, as well as severe penance. It was the combination of these two factors that acted as a deterrent against the crime, rather than the repercussions enshrined in the law codes.

Although the final paper covered does not focus directly on economic or social history, it is an important contribution to an ongoing debate that has significant implications for how we understand and carry out historical research relating to the period 400–1100 in Britain, including how we define the period itself and the people who lived in it. The past 10 years have seen impassioned, sometimes rancorous, debates amongst Anglophone scholars about the use of the term 'Anglo-Saxon' as an appropriate one within the study of early medieval England. Naismith adds to this debate with a comprehensive analysis of the historical development of the term with the aim of shedding light on the 'nexus of nationalism, history, language and political ideology, and on how that nexus was remade to suit the changing needs of each new age'. Naismith walks the reader through a chronological history of the term 'Anglo-Saxon' from the eighth century to the present day. The earlier history of the medieval uses of the term is particularly useful for students of the period in laying out the development and use of the term before the Conquest and immediately after it. Naismith notes that the term was initially coined as an exonym in the eighth century to distinguish the English Saxons from their continental counterparts. 'Anglo-Saxon' was later used in a specifically English context, predominantly during the ninth- and tenth-century reigns of Alfred the Great and his son Edward the Elder, when it was integral to the presentation of the identity of their proto-English kingdom as being a composite entity comprising West Saxons and Anglians from Mercia. Outside this, however, the terms 'Angles' and 'Saxons' were more often used as catch-all terms to refer to the English-speaking people of Britain. It was not until the sixteenth century that 'Anglo-Saxon' was resurrected as a term to refer to both the people of pre-Conquest England and the period of history from *c.* 400 to *c.* 1066 more broadly. As part of Naismith's analysis, he shows how, in the nineteenth century, 'racial Anglo-Saxonism' took on a more 'explicitly ethnic and racial hue' in both the United States and Britain, before charting what he sees as a departure from this tendency from the mid-twentieth century, as popular understanding of the term went in several different directions. Although Naismith's conclusions may not satisfy all readers, it is an important contribution to the continuing debate on how we study, teach, and periodize the history of pre-Conquest England.

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