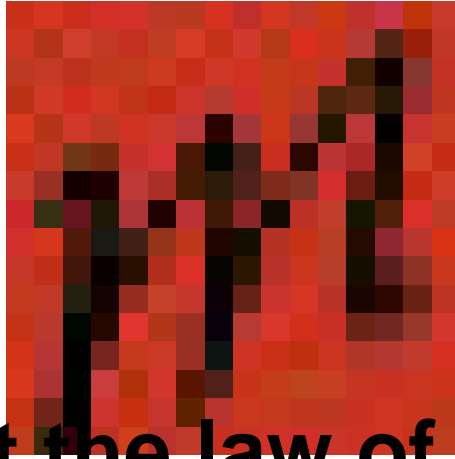


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# XVI.4 That the law of polygamy is a matter of calculation

- The Spirit of Law - Book XVI. How the laws of domestic slavery relate to the nature of the climate -

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## XVI.4 That the law of polygamy is a matter of calculation

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According to the calculations being made in various places in Europe, more boys are born there than girls [1] ; contrariwise, the relations of Asia tell us that many more girls are born there than boys. [2] The law of a single wife in Europe and the one which that allows several in Asia therefore have a certain relationship to the climate.

In the cold climates of Asia, as in Europe, more boys are born than girls ; this, say the lamas, [3] is the reason for the law which there allows a woman to have more than one husband. [4]

But I have difficulty believing there are many countries where the disproportion is great enough to require the introduction of the law of multiple wives or the law of multiple husbands. That just means that the plurality of women or even the plurality of men is more consonant with nature in certain countries than in others.

I admit that if it were true, as the relation tell us, that in Bantam there are ten women for every man, [5] that would be a most particular case of polygamy.

In all this I am not justifying the customs, but giving the reasons for them.

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[1] Mr. Arbuthnot finds that in England the number of boys surpasses that of girls ; we were mistaken to conclude that it was the same in all climates.

[2] See Kaempfer, who records a census of Meaco where 182,072 males and 223,573 females were found.

[3] Du Halde, *Description of the Empire of China*, vol. IV, p. 4.

[4] Albuzeit-el-hassen, one of two Mohammedan Arabs who went to the Indies and to China in the ninth century, takes this custom as prostitution, because nothing so shocked Mohammedan notions.

[5] *Recueil des voyages qui ont servi à l'établissement de la Compagnie des Indes*, vol. I.