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# XVIII.13 On civil laws among peoples who do not cultivate the land

- The Spirit of Law - Book XVIII. On laws in their relationship to the nature of the terrain -

Publication date: jeudi 6 septembre 2018

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It is principally the distribution of lands that bloats the civil code. In nations where there has been no such distribution, there will be very few civil laws.

One can call the institutions of such peoples *practices* rather than *laws*.

In nations of this type, old men who remember things of the past have great authority ; one cannot be distinguished by property, but by assistance and by counsel.

These peoples roam and disperse into grazing lands or forests. Marriage there will not be as dependable as in our societies, where it is fixed by the dwelling, and where the wife maintains a house ; they can therefore more readily change wives, have multiple wives, and sometimes mingle indifferently like animals.

Pastoral peoples cannot distance themselves from their herds, which provide their subsistence, nor will they be able to separate from their wives who look after them. All this must therefore work together, all the more so since, living ordinarily on great plains where there are few suitable sites to settle, their wives, their children, and their herds would become the prey of their enemies.

Their laws will determine the distribution of booty, and will, like our Salic laws, address in particular the business of thefts.