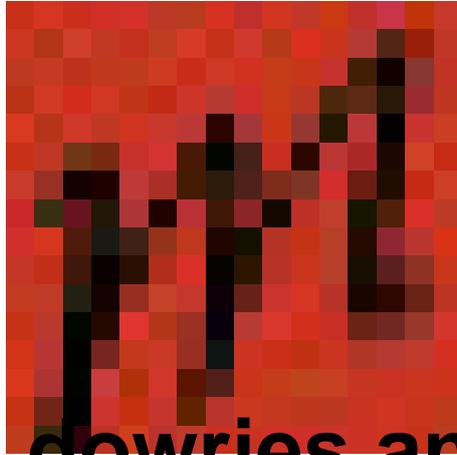


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VII.15 On dowries and nuptial advantages in various constitutions

- The Spirit of Law - Book VII. Consequences of the different principles of the three governments with respect to sumptuary laws, to luxury, and to the condition of women -

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VII.15 On dowries and nuptial advantages in various constitutions

Dowries should be considerable in monarchies so that husbands may maintain their rank and customary luxury. They should be modest in republics, where luxury must not prevail [1] ; they should be next to nothing in despotic states, where women are more or less slaves.

The communal estate between husband and wife introduced by French laws is entirely suitable in monarchical government, because it involves women in domestic matters, and recalls them as if despite themselves to the management of their households. It is less suitable in a republic, where women have more virtue. It would be absurd in despotic states, where women are almost always themselves part of the master's property.

As women by their status are rather inclined to marry, the gains acquisitions the law gives them on their husbands' holdings are not needed. But they would be most pernicious in a republic, because their private wealth produces luxury. In despotic states, nuptial acquisitions should be their subsistence, and nothing more.

[1] Marseille was the wisest of the republics of its time ; dowries could not exceed a hundred crowns in silver and five in raiment, says Strabo (book IV).