
REVIEW ARTICLES

The Study of Economy and Society at the "Centre d'Histoire Economique et Sociale de la Région Lyonnaise"

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Although officially founded in 1964 by the Ministry of National Education, the *Centre d'Histoire Economique et Sociale de la Région Lyonnaise* is in fact the product of lengthy planning, the components of which took shape as it brought together groups of researchers and then fully-fledged research teams. The centre is at present about to become a *Laboratoire associé* of the C.N.R.S. — a promotion which will strengthen the research projects proposed by the directors in general consultation with the research members as a whole.

Given the structure of the Centre, it would be impossible to separate the studies undertaken in contemporary economic and social history from those undertaken in both modern and medieval history. It is our purpose, in fact, to explain the economic and social composition of a vast geographic area stretching from the reaches of Bresse to those of the Bas-Rhône, from the western side of the Massif Central to the peaks of the Alps of Savoy and Dauphiné, to reveal its varied features, to tackle, and if possible to resolve, major problems to which there have hitherto been no answers. In this situation the individual and collective studies directed by Professor Gascon, Garden, Garrier, Fédou and myself can only be separated arbitrarily and in doing so the attempted appraisal of more general developments would consequently collapse. We feel, then, that scholars of contemporary economic and social history may find it of interest to follow our work in other periods. Despite considerable variety both in method and in specific problems confronted, the various research projects which we are conducting on the period between the XIIIth and XXth centuries come together and prove complementary through their common objectives.

1. COLLECTIVE STUDIES.

This common purpose is particularly evident in the field of the collective studies on which the Centre is at present engaged. These are concerned primarily with social structures and ways of life in Lyons from the late Middle Ages to the First World War. Professor René Fédou, for example, has organized two studies, one on the « Development of urban property in the Lyons area in the XIVth and XVth centuries », and a second on « Social structures and mental attitudes in Lyons » in the same period. Professor Richard Gascon is particularly interested in the study of features of « life » in the metropolis throughout the XVIth century with the aim of evaluating collective phenomena both of attitudes and beliefs and also of social pathology. Finally we have ourselves been organizing for some years now a massive investigation into « The geography of wealth and social structures in Lyons in the XIXth century (1815-1914) ». The study is completed and will shortly be published.¹ It is intended as much as a history of investments as an « x-ray » of social structures based on the reconstruction of possessions. Once these studies have all been completed we can expect to have at our disposal concrete material covering five extremely eventful centuries on which to base a serious social history of the region.

The more purely economic problems of the great commercial and industrial city have not, however, been neglected. In fact R. Gascon has begun with a study in series of thousands of bills of exchange, a study of credit, in the Lyons market and those most closely linked to it, and of the general geography of the channels of monetary exchanges which bound the city to the more general European currents, between the late XVIth and early XVIIth centuries — and it is the XVIIth century which still constitutes a relatively unknown period in the city's history. Professor Gascon is also drawing up an « industrial map » of France for the same period in order to place the « industrial » centre of the Lyons region in context. In this we have been greatly assisted by the vast but unclassified 'Papiers d'industriels et de commerçants' kept in the *Archives Départementales du Rhône* (Series B). We have drawn up a systematic inventory of the main sources and for some of the concerns we have been able to reconstruct the composition of their clientèle. The resulting documentation will shortly appear under the title « *Lyons et le Grand Commerce International au XVIII^e siècle* ».

At a regional level there is also an abundance of socio-economic problems which have led to a number of discoveries which we hope will prove valuable. For some years now, and with the assistance of a team of researchers, I have been studying « Economic growth in the Lyons region in the XIXth and XXth centuries ». This is designed as a long-term study which is confined initially — although the subject has proved to be highly complex — to

¹ Centre d'Histoire économique et sociale de la région lyonnaise — offset.

assessing the physical product, for industry and agriculture, for the period 1815/30-1914. The results so far obtained permit us to continue our investigations confident of obtaining valuable results.

More recently, however, demographic studies have held pride of place. Monsieur Fédou is organizing a collective study of the « Demography of Lyons (XIIIth-XVth centuries) » while Gascon is studying the formation and mobility of the Lyons population in the XVIth and early XVIIth centuries, based on a systematic survey of the registers of admissions of patients to the Hôtel-Dieu, which have been duly set in graph format. Messieurs Garden and Garrier have also extended their researches to the Lyons region as a whole and have studied rural behaviour and beliefs in particular, as well as population movements in the small merchant and manufacturing towns of Villefranche, Beaujeu, Tarare, Belleville, Trévoux, Saint-Symphorien-sur-Coise, and Givors. The composition of Lyons population from the XIXth century until present times has also received their attention in relation to the massive national inquiries being conducted at present. Finally Yves Lequin is in the process of organizing team study of socio-cultural phenomena in the modern period at a regional level, and an initial study of the spread of literacy has made a promising start.

2. INDIVIDUAL STUDIES.

Despite the importance of these collective projects which serve to enliven the Centre itself and also to provide us with a range of information on various problems which would quite surpass the capabilities of any individual scholar, it is also true that the Centre considers that individual research and theses (3rd cycle) are no less important. In a note of this kind it is certainly not our intention to draw up a prize-list, nor even to provide a lengthy catalogue, but we shall restrict ourselves, as we have done with the collective works, to indicating the general orientations which emerge from the mass of individual projects.

a) *Rural Development: economic and social.*

It is primarily the long-term history of the Lyons countryside which has attracted attention; Serge Dontenwill is working on a State Doctoral Thesis on « Communities and neighbourhoods in central France (XVIth to XVIIth centuries) » while Bernard Bonnin has completed a painstaking study of the « Dauphiné countryside 1575-1730 », in which economic, social and demographic history are brought together in this completely untouched area. Gérard Sabatier is engaged in a study of the nobility and the *seigneurie* in the South-east of the Massif Central (XVII and XVIIIth centuries). Claude Biscaino is continuing a study of the nobility in the Lyons region between

the XIIth and XIVth centuries, and Georges Durand provided us with a remarkable *thèse de 3^e cycle* (« The landed possessions of the Hôtel-Dieu in Lyons. A contribution to the study of property-holding in the Rhone region under the Ancien Regime »² and is preparing his state doctorate entitled « Wine-growers in the Lyons region from the XVIth to the XIXth centuries » under the guidance of our colleague Pierre Goubert of the Sorbonne, but he still continues to participate in the activities of the Centre and to enliven our seminars. Similarly Robert Estier is still studying the relations between Roanne and its agrarian and agricultural surroundings in the XIXth century. We should also mention that Gilbert Garrier's massive thesis, « The Peasants of the Beaujolais and Lyons areas between 1800 and 1970 » has recently been published in two volumes by the University Press of Grenoble, and that Jean Merley has recently presented an excellent and highly original thesis — despite its modest title — on the Upper Loire between the late XVIIIth century and the 1880's. In this region an unusual attempt to industrialize between the 1840's and 1870's was halted by the 'weight' of agrarian structures, the development of which was so slow as to be perceptible to only the most skilful of analysts.

b) *The Phenomenon of Industrialization and the World of Labour.*

Amongst this impressive body of activity, however, the region's industrial development both in Lyons, and outside the metropolis has been far from neglected. Using absolutely new methods and tackling an original set of problems Jean Peyrot is preparing a definitive study of Lyons manufactures from the late XVIIth to the late XVIIIth centuries. He is attempting to define the techniques used, the organization, the methods of financing and sales, and is also tracing the influences of internal and external economic developments on its growth. At the conclusion of a study which will prove fundamental, Pierre Cayez tackles the major problem of « Industrialization in Lyons in the XIXth century ». The study clearly defines the successive stages of the « industrial invasion » and measures the regional, national and international diffusion of Lyons industry throughout the richest and most glorious centuries of its long history. Jean Lorcin, on the other hand, in studying the social and economic history of the Sainte-Etienne region from the 1880's to the present, analysed the causes and conditions of its spectacular loss of dynamism and also its remarkable revival after the Second World War. Yves Lequin is finishing a monumental thesis on « The Workers of the Lyons region in the XIXth century (1850-1914) » and this very praiseworthy double enterprise provides a very detailed and broad picture not only of the composition, ambitions, beliefs and development of the conditions of life in the world of labour

² G. DURAND, published in summer 1974 by the Centre d'Histoire économique et sociale de la région lyonnaise — offset.

and of the great social currents which animated it, but also of the economic changes in the region as a whole which underlay the ideas and behaviour of the people.

Finally Henri Morsel has compiled an immense documentation largely drawn from business archives, which provides a pioneering work on « Industrialization in the French Alps 1871-1921 ». One need only indicate the obvious interest of such a study which will shortly be completed.

c) Urban Societies,

The collective studies at present under way, however, far from exhaust research into urban society, and more detailed studies serve to strengthen the former. Henri Pansu is studying Claude-Joseph Bonnet, the great merchant-manufacturer of Lyons who dominated its manufacturing for a great part of the XIXth century. This study throws light on the city's society, or at least on a section of its ruling élite. The study does not concentrate on the merchant alone but on all those who circulated around him whose daily lives, operations, careers and thoughts are carefully examined by Henri Pansu.

Going back rather further, Françoise Bayard is studying « Finance and financiers in the late XVIth and early XVIIth centuries ». Nicole Gonthier is tackling the difficult question of « Poverty in Lyons and the Lyons region from the XIIIth to the XVth centuries », while Michelle Bonnet is preparing a state doctoral thesis on « Family and society in Lyons and the towns of the South-East in the late Middle Ages ». It was also under the aegis of the Centre that the doctoral theses by Maurice Garden « Lyons and its citizens in the XVIIIth century » and by Jean-Pierre Gutton « Society and the poor: the example of the Généralité de Lyon (1534-1789) » were published.

But it will only be fully possible to understand Lyons society when other studies enable us to make fuller comparisons with other towns of the region. We are, however, very hopeful that this will come about in view of the various studies at present projected. One example is provided by Réjane Brondy's forthcoming book « Economy and society in Chambéry in the XVth century ». Robert Chagny is making an exhaustive study of the city and the social structure of Grenoble from the outbreak of the Revolution up to the 1880's, and Albert Martourey is about to complete a general, but mainly social, study of Sainte-Etienne in the XIXth century.

d) The economic and social crises of the XXth century.

Many of the studies which we have already mentioned will, as they proceed, examine the economic movements and crises of the XIXth and early XXth centuries. The inter-war years, the period of the Second World War and the difficult years which followed are at present, however, beyond our scope. But this major gap is being filled thanks to the assistance of the

Comité d'Histoire de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale whose Rhône representative, Bernard Aulas, presented a thesis on the problem of provisioning Lyons during the Second World War. Monique Luirard has also embarked on a long-term study entitled « A region in crisis: the Loire between 1936 and 1951 ». This has now progressed beyond the initial stages, while Mademoiselle Luirard has already presented an excellent thesis (3rd cycle) on the « National Revolution » in the Montbrison region (1940-42). Her tenacity and the fact that she is fortunately able to consult previously inaccessible sources allow us to predict with confidence that the present study will provide a fresh and comprehensive insight into a very eventful period which is still very much in the shade. Jean-Luc Pinol has been able to examine the alignment of social and political groups in his study of the Popular Front. Various other theses (3rd cycle) devoted to pressure groups and based on research on the regional press should also be mentioned. All these new research projects illustrate the scale of the Centre's interests and especially its interest in the contemporary period.

e) *Problems of regional demography.*

Finally, due to the initiative of Professors Garden and Garrier, studies in demographic history can claim pride of place. Alain Bideau, whose essay on « The population of Thoissey in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries » rightly attracted the attention of specialists, is completing a thesis on the demography of the Dombes region under the Ancien Régime, and Monique Bornarel is studying the demographic history of Grenoble between the late XVIIth century and the 1760's. After an outstanding thesis (3rd cycle) on French immigration legislation between the wars, Jean-Charles Bonnet is studying the huge question of immigration and naturalization in the Lyons region under the Third Republic. Other studies are projected, and thanks to them and to the collective studies under way at the same time, South-East France's blank page of demographic history should be successfully filled in.

These, then, are the main lines of research which the *Centre for the Economic and Social History of the Lyons Region* has been following. It can be claimed with confidence that they cover all the major questions posed by the composition and development over a series of centuries of one of the elements which make up the economic and social structure of France as a whole. It is certainly true that this programme is orientated towards the long term — each problem once settled indicates new or previously unknown gaps which we have not as yet discovered. It is also clear that the social and economic development of the region will encourage the recruitment of many more researchers. But we are equally certain that the manner in which these problems have been tackled and the enthusiasm which both our researchers and their directors have shown in resolving them provides the greatest guarantee of the future of our workshop.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE CENTRE D'HISTOIRE ECONOMIQUE ET SOCIALE
DE LA REGION LYONNAISE (OFFSET)

JEAN MERLEY, *L'industrie en Haute-Loire de la fin de la Monarchie de Juillet aux débuts de la III^e République*. Préface de Pierre Leon, 1972, pp 450.

PIERRE GOUJON, *Le Vignoble de Saône-et-Loire au XIX^e siècle (1815-1870)*, 1973, pp. 494.

Publications by members of the Centre which have been mentioned in the text:

SERGE DONTENWILL, *Une Seigneurie sous l'Ancien-Régime*. Préface de Richard Gascon
Roanne, Horwath, 1973, pp. 291.

MAURICE GARDEN, *Lyon et les Lyonnais au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1970,
pp. 772.

JEAN PIERRE GUTTON, *La Société et les Pauvres. L'exemple de la Généralité de Lyon
(1534-1789)*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1971, pp. 504.

GILBERT GARRIER, *Paysans du Beaujolais et du Lyonnais (1800-1970)*, Grenoble P.U.G.,
1973, 2 vols., pp. 714+246.

