
REVIEW ARTICLES

Research in Progress at the "Centre de Recherches Historiques," of Paris

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In its day-to-day activities the *Centre for Historical Research* has witnessed a very rapid expansion of the fields in which history is concerned.¹ The historian has now begun to explore virtually every field of the social and human sciences — from demography, and town-planning, to the family, popular and learned cultures, material civilizations, mentalities, ecology and even political behaviour etc. Without neglecting economics which have always held an important place in the interests of the Centre (prices, wages, commerce, shipping etc.) it is possible to detect two main themes amongst the new frontiers which have been opened up.

First there is a new ethnological approach to the family (concentrating on such factors as matrimonial regulations, conjugal life, division of roles, everyday life, family structures) and in this field we might point to the research in progress on the economy and society of the Upper Pyrenean Baronies. Secondly there is the study of "traditional" France in terms of cultural and social anthropology. This has led in particular to the study of ecological systems, of the spread of medicine in 18th century society and of the historical sociology of the origins of the bourgeoisie.

The ever increasing use of quantitative methods (statistics, series, automatic cartography, models etc.) has made it possible for these new developments to be placed on an increasingly sound basis. Methodological research and experiment can no longer be considered as a purely auxiliary or "secondary" activity, for as the methods of research may well bias the results

¹ Cf. P. NORA et J. LE GOFF (eds.), *Faire de l'histoire*, Gallimard, 1974, 4 vol.

it is essential that they should be treated as an integral aspect of the problems presented in each field of study.²

The survey which follows is, in an attempt to be comprehensive, somewhat like an inventory, but its purpose is to provide a picture of the research which is at present in progress, and an example of the activities of the C.R.H.³

I. STUDIES IN ANCIENT HISTORY⁴

(J.P. Vernant, P. Vidal Naquet, M. Detienne)

This team is at present concerned with five main topics — the theoretical and practical problems of studying myths, the mental category "hybrid" in Ancient Greece, the study of agriculture, money and pre-monetary objects, the study of sacrifice and divination. The last topic has given rise to a particular study of hunting in ancient and archaic societies: the mythology and ideology of hunting, the relations between hunting and war or hunting and sacrifice, the status of animals, the social status of hunters etc.

II. STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL HISTORY

a) *Traditional habitat and material conditions of life in the rural world*⁵ (J.M. Pesez, F. Piponnier, O. Chapelot, A. Greslau, J.M. Poisson)

In addition to the excavations carried out on the sites of various medieval villages, historians are now concerned to reconstruct the material world of

² F. FURET, « Le quantitatif en histoire », in *Faire de l'histoire*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 42-61.

³ This article is based on the reports made by the directors of individual research projects in June 1974.

⁴ M. BIARDEAU et CH. MALAMOND, *Le Sacrifice dans l'Inde ancienne*, ed. du Seuil, (in the press). M. DETIENNE, *Les jardins d'Adonis*, Gallimard, 1972. IDEM, « Orphée au miel », in *Faire de l'histoire*, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 56-75. J.L. DURAND, L. KAHN-LYOTARD, J.P. VENANT, M. DETIENNE, CH. SEGAL, *Le Sacrifice en Grèce ancienne* (to be published in 1975: ed. du Seuil). M.I. FINLEY et J.P. VIDAL NAQUET, *Problèmes de la terre en Grèce ancienne*, Mouton 1973, coll. Civilisations et Sociétés. F. FRONTISI, *Mythes, récits, représentations figurées centrées autour du personnage du Dédale* (to appear shortly). J.P. VENANT (and others), *Divination et rationalité*, ed. du Seuil, 1974. J.P. VENANT, M. DETIENNE, *Les ruses de l'intelligence* (to appear shortly). P. VIDAL NAQUET, « Le cru, l'enfant grec et le cuit », in *Faire de l'histoire*, op. cit. P. VIDAL NAQUET, *Lévi-Strauss en Brocéliande* (to appear shortly) in collaboration with J. LE GOFF.

⁵ J.M. PESEZ, « L'habitation paysanne en Bourgogne médiévale », in *La construction au Moyen Age: histoire et archéologie*, Paris, 1973, pp. 219-233. IDEM, « Villy-le-Mortier, recherches archéologiques sur le site d'une maison forte », *Château Gaillard*, VI, Caen, 1973, pp. 147-163, (in collaboration with F. PIPONNIER). IDEM, « Ricerche e prospettive di lavoro intorno ai villaggi abbandonati », in *Archeologia e geografia del popolamento (Quaderni Storici, 24)*, Ancona, 1973, pp. 767-806.

the medieval countryside in its archeological, ethnological and historical totality. At Dracy (in the Côte d'Or), for example, the 13th and 14th century village buildings have been unearthed as have the tombs of the late Middle Ages, which together with the study of the written documents relating to contemporary villages in the same region and an ethnological study of the region around Dracy, will provide much new information on the way in which inhabited areas were organized in the Middle Ages, on the nature of peasant life and its conditions.

The excavation of another site of the same period as Dracy but geographically very distant (the village of Brucato near Palermo) together with that of the fortified village of Essertines-Basse (on the Loire), which was probably abandoned during the 15th century, provide two sets of comparisons with the village in Burgundy and serve to establish and define the different areas of material civilization.

b) *The study of the mendicants and the city in medieval France*⁶
(J. Le Goff)

The study of "mentalities" derives in the first place from a particular interpretation of all documents.⁷ The study of the mendicant orders provides an extremely good example of this. The study of the establishment of the mendicant orders from the 13th to the 16th centuries is in fact indissociable from the history of the towns themselves and provides a means of examining the standards of medieval towns, the appearance of tensions between town and countryside, and the development of their specific ideology: in quantitative terms this can be studied through the sermons (which were the more effective where the population was the more numerous) and in qualitative terms through the advent of the theme of the decline of christianity in the towns (the attack on declining customs and standards). It also provides a truly remarkable sketch of the dependence of the countryside on the town from which the patterns and structures of life originated and spread. The mendicant orders provide important information on all these topics, and are the leading witnesses of the process of urbanization between the 13th and 16th centuries.

The study of another aspect of the medieval West has started more recently, and this is devoted to the *exempla*, which is a particularly fertile source for the study of popular culture. The study involves bringing together

⁶ M. DE FONTETTE, « Les Mendicants supprimés au IIe Concile de Lyon (1274). Frères Dachets et Frères Pies in *Les Mendicants en Pays d'Oc au XIIIe siècle*, ed. Privat, 1973. J. LE GOFF, *Les Mendicants en Pays d'Oc au XIIIe siècle*, ed. Privat, 1973. C. RIBAU-COURT, « Les Mendicants du Midi d'après la cartographie de l'enquête », in *Les Mendicants...*, op. cit.

⁷ Cf. the article by J. LE GOFF, « Mentalities: a new field for historians », *Social Science Information*, 1974, XIII-1, p. 89.

the manuscripts containing these *exempla* and then attempting to define the function of this form of literature in society between the 12th and 14th centuries and to explore the ideological system which lay behind this form of preaching.

c) *The Florentine Catasto of 1427*⁸ (Christiane Kaplish-Zuber)

The Catasto drawn up by the Florentine commune in 1427 contains an enormous mass of information on the population and society of Tuscany in the early 15th century. The systematic study of this document with the aid of a computer has made it possible to "process" some 50,000 families — that is some 250,000 individuals — who belonged to an essentially rural environment. Each individual is specified by age, name, sex and relationship with the head of the household, and property is analysed in similar detail (land, animals, slaves, loans, investments, debts ect.).

As a consequence it has been possible to reconstruct very accurately what it meant to live, to get married, have children and ensure the survival of a family in 15th century Tuscany, and to assess the contribution of personal, family and social influences on the development of Renaissance civilization. And taking a perspective which goes beyond the confines of Tuscany alone, the Catasto will also provide many answers to problems which affect the whole of Western Europe.⁹

III. THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF PRE-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

a) *International Study of Tithe Revenues and Land Rents from the 14th to the 19th century*¹⁰ (J. Goy and E. Le Roy Ladurie)

In response to the requests of many scholars and the recommendation of the International Congress at St. James of Campostella (in April 1973), E. Le Roy Ladurie and J. Goy have extended their study of the level of tithe revenue and land rents from the 14th to the 19th centuries on to an

⁸ CH. KLAPISCH-ZUBER, « Sources et méthodes de la démographie médiévale. Le catasto florentin de 1427-30 », *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Nice*, 17 Sept. 1972. IDEM, « Household and family in Tuscany in 1427 », in *Family and Household in Past Times*, P. Laslett and R. Wells, eds., Cambridge, 1972. IDEM, « A uno pane e uno vino. Structure et développement de la famille rurale toscane (début du XV^e siècle) », *Annales ESC*, 1972, pp. 873-901 (in collaboration with M. DEMONET). IDEM, « Attitudes devant l'enfant. Le Moyen Age », *Annales de démographie historique*, 1973. IDEM, « L'enfance en Toscane au début du XV^e siècle », *ibid.* IDEM, « Une analyse des correspondances d'un recensement ancien, le catasto florentin de 1427 » (in collaboration with M. DEMONET), to appear shortly.

⁹ A book containing the results of this study is at present being prepared.

¹⁰ Cf. J. GOY, E. LE ROY LADURIE and others, *Les fluctuations du produit de la dime*, Mouton, 1972, Cahiers des études rurales.

international scale. Research teams have already been set up in Germany, Britain, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Central America, South America and in France itself of course. These studies will be brought together in order to draw up a general report which will be presented together with various other papers at a conference to be held in Paris in 1977. The purpose of the study is to use the methods of study which have already been well established and to extend the hypotheses and conclusions already formulated for France to a European and extra-European frame of reference.

b) *The ethnohistory of the Baronies (16th-20th centuries)*

An interdisciplinary team of researchers (including ethnologists, linguists, demographers, historians and medical haemotypologists), assisted by the Laboratory of Social Anthropology of the *Collège de France* (I. Chiva) and the Pyrenean Institute of Anthropological Studies at Toulouse University, have begun to study the region known as the Baronies, containing some thirty communes, and about 3,000 inhabitants, in the Department of the Upper Pyrenees.

The study began with a haemotypological general health survey carried out by the Blood Transfusion Centre at Tarbes, the conclusions of which make it possible to identify certain specific diseases and biological traits. This was followed by a historical and ethnological study of the economy and society of the Baronies. The purpose of the study is to show how a society which in the 17th and 18th centuries appeared to be perfectly stable was in less than a century and a half to experience a drastic decline and to remain totally "closed" to urbanization. J. Goy is responsible for the historical part of the study, while Mme A. Chamoux is directing the demographic research. In connection with these studies E. Le Roy Ladurie is also preparing a book on the historical ethnology of the Haute-Ariège from the late Middle Ages to the present entitled *Montaillou, village occitan*.

c) *A study of post-mortem inquests in the Meaux region in the 17th and 18th centuries* (Micheline Baulant)

As in the more limited case of medieval archeology so do the boundaries between history and ethnography disappear in a historical study of the material conditions of life. Post-mortem inquests provide a virtually comprehensive picture of the material life of peasant families and the study of these documents will make it possible to recapture the long-term evolution of household goods, clothing and other domestic possessions in a way that the chance relics found through careful excavation do not always permit.¹¹

¹¹ M. BAULANT, « La consommation non alimentaire des familles paysannes dans la région de Meaux aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles », Paper delivered at the *Ile Congrès des historiens économistes français* (Oct. 1973).

- d) *The Church, marriage and conjugal life in France during the Ancien Régime - 17th and 18th centuries* (A. Burguière)

The purpose of this study is to examine an important sample of the diocesan Archives dealing with requests for marriage dispensations and other matters connected with the regulations of conjugal life. These data can then be compared with other sources — with parish registers for those parishes where requests for dispensations were frequent, in order to measure with some accuracy levels of consanguinity, or with notarial documents and other registers in order to assess the fortunes and patrimonies involved in these unorthodox unions. The collective study of these documents will make possible an anthropological and social study of marriage, and will illustrate certain features of social reproduction in France under the Ancien Régime.

IV. THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF TRADITIONAL FRANCE

Using quantitative methods in the pre-statistical era is like trying to solve an unfinished puzzle. But they at least have the value of raising hypotheses even if these cannot always be proved. The central purpose of the series of studies of the late 18th century and the 19th century is to use the statistical sources which have either been inherited or reconstructed as a sort of observatory of the traditional ecology of France. Statistics already exist and traditional France exists once again. To some extent the task is that of defining what the ethnographers call the "cultural areas" with made up the France of the Ancien Régime. But this project is also concerned with the problem of development and under-development, taking the concept of modernization as its *leit-motif* and exploring such topics as levels of literacy, agricultural productivity, geographic and social mobility, levels of industrialization, spread of demographic Malthusianism etc.

A choice example of the 19th century legacy of statistics is the *Statistique Générale de la France* and this provides an exceptional range of demographic, economic and administrative data on traditional society. The C.R.H. together with the University of Michigan (ICPR Ann Arbor, Michigan) has undertaken the task of recording these documents on tape. This has a double objective. In the first place it will create a "data bank". The material archived in this way will then be available to all researchers interested in any particular series. The computer is extremely valuable for storage because it combines an infallible memory with the most effective means of finding information using a system of automatic indexing.¹² Secondly certain topics

¹² This collection will also be added to from other primary series drawn up for other projects undertaken by the Centre (e.g. on the Notables during the First Empire, on the Florentine Catasto, on army recruitment statistics).

will be treated individually (e.g. the study on literacy described below) using statistical analyses (e.g. automatic cartography, factor analysis of correspondences, regression analyses etc.).

V. THE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE ORIGINS OF BOURGEOIS FRANCE

Traditional historical periodization has tended to draw an impassable divide between the Ancien Regime and the "contemporary" period. But when it comes to grasping the continuity within a society during and after a period of hiatus, such as the Revolution, then social analysis makes it possible to reconstruct the fundamental links. The Centre has two studies in progress which have begun to sketch out from different sources a historical sociology of bourgeois France.

- a) *Social Mobility in the 17th and 18th centuries*¹³ (D. Bien, G. Chaussinand, F. Furet, J. Meyer)

Using the individual records of admission to the *Compagnie des Secretaires du Roi*, the purpose of this study is to trace individual careers over two or three generations. In addition the royal almanacs, various noble books of heraldry and a series of printed works containing noble genealogies have also been used and have made it possible to tabulate over 2,000 families. The main object of this project is to reconstruct the various stages of the social ladder which led finally to the office of secretary to the king.

- b) *The Notables of the Empire around 1810*¹⁴ (L. Bergeon, G. Chaussinand, F. Furet)

Prosopography is one of the methods greatly favoured by American sociologists and is one of the fields recently taken over by historians. In the study of the notables it was from this that the idea of a "dictionary of social biography" originally came, drawn from the lists of the electoral colleges of the various *arrondissements* and Departements. Biographical information on some 100,000 notables can be collected in this way, including name, marital status, number of children, age, posts and occupation before 1789, during the Revolution, the Consulate and the Empire, wealth (assessed in both capital and revenue), date of election, number of electors, size of the electorate and the number of votes obtained by the candidate. Drawing on other sources as well and employing statistical methods this information will provide us with a very accurate description of the class on Notables from the late 18th century up to the mid 19th century.

¹³ D.D. BIEN, « La réaction aristocratique avant 1789, l'exemple de l'armée », *Annales ESC*, Jan.-Feb. 1974, pp. 23-48.

¹⁴ G. CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET, L. BERGERON, R. FORSTER, « Les notables du "Grand Empire" », in *Annales ESC*, n. 5, 1971, pp. 1052-1075.

c) *Elites in contemporary France* (Adeline Daumard)

In much the same pattern as the two studies mentioned above, Mlle Daumard is using contemporary printed sources in order to identify the pattern of contemporary elites in France. Family background, education, career, civic and political activities, and family life are the criteria used to characterise the milieu of the great *Corps d'Etat*, the senior civil servants, Cabinet politicians, the press and radio. But unlike sociologists who take their information directly from those concerned, more normal historical methods are employed in this study of these elites which are part of our own world in so far as they are studied through what is published about them.

VI. SOCIAL GROUPS AND TYPES OF CULTURE

Historians have hardly begun to study systematically the value systems of given societies, that is the emergence, diffusion and impact of religious, political and cultural paradigms. Key examples of this type of study can be found in four separate fields — religion, political life, medicine and schooling.

a) *Anthropology of the Sacred*¹⁵ (A. Dupont)

Lengthy research on pilgrimages and popular cults in Western Europe has made it possible to construct some important tabulations and to study in detail the collective phenomenon of visions, the semantics of the words "pilgrim" and "pilgrimage", the titulatures of the parish and consecrated churches in the places of worship in Western Europe (so far 38 dioceses have been recorded).

b) *The Mazarinades* (D. Richet)

The objective of this study is to examine the *Mazarinades* to discover their ideological and political content and to reveal the way in which political desires were expressed in France at the time of the Fronde. In terms of method this study lies between a refined exercise in linguistic analysis and a simple computation of easily counted data. A first attempt at computerized content analysis and translation has already been carried out on a sample of twelve pamphlets.

¹⁵ A. DUPONT, « Pèlerinages et lieux sacrés », in *Mélanges Fernand Braudel*, t. II, Privat, 1973, pp. 189-206. IDEM, « Les sacralités de Rocamadour », in *Actes du Ier Colloque de Rocamadour*, Luzerch, 1973, pp. 183-207. IDEM, « Pour une anthropologie religieuse », in *Faire de l'histoire*, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 105-136. IDEM, *Pèlerinages et pèlerins. Pour une anthropologie de pèlerinage*, to be published by Calmann-Lévy.

c) *Analysis of the Cahiers de doléances*¹⁶ (D. Richet, F. Furet)

The *Cahiers de Doléances* between 1614 and 1789 provide an extremely rich source for the study of political cultural topics. As any content-analysis, no matter how systematic or quantified it may be, this study will need to be complemented by a sociological study of the electors and the participants and by the political literature of the Estates.

d) *Medicine and doctors in France over the centuries*¹⁷ (J.-P. Aron, J.-P. Goubert, J.-P. Peter)

The study of the spread of medicine in French society can be tackled from various angles — growing awareness of medicine, of medical prescriptions and treatises, the representation of man in medical terms (normal/pathological - health/illness) which are often used with a social and political connotation, the increase in consumption of medicines from the 18th century, the impressive rise of the doctor as an individual due to the prestige of the practice of medicine and the general authority which it commanded, the links between each generation and the field of epistemology (i.e. the evolution of medical knowledge), and between patients and everything concerned with physical reality, and even with the imaginary representation of the body, for both the doctor and the patient.

Problems such as these, however, can only be studied after a study has been made of the French medical practitioners as a whole (providing information on their families, university and practical careers, economic position, social and political life etc.)

e) *Primary education and literacy in France from the end of the 18th century*¹⁸ (F. Furet, J. Ozouf)

The systematic study of the data provided by Maggiolo on literacy has made it possible for us to test the validity of signatures as indicators of literacy (for the 19th century at least), and to define the phenomenon accurately in historical and geographical terms. It also enables us first to establish that there is no single model by which literacy gets under way,

¹⁶ A. CHARTIER and J. MAGLE, « Les doléances des paroisses rurales du baillage de Troyes », *Annales ESC*, Nov.-Dec. 1973. F. FURET, « Les élections de 1789 dans les baillages d'Orléans et de Troyes », in *Mélanges en l'honneur d'Ernest Labrousse*, 1974. D. RICHEL, « Présentation de l'enquête sur les doléances de 1614 », *Annales ESC*, n. 1, 1974.

¹⁷ J.-P. GOUBERT, *Malades et Médecins en Bretagne 1770-1790*, Paris, 1974. J.-P. PETER, J. REVEL, « Le corps: l'homme malade et son histoire », in *Faire de l'histoire*, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 169-191.

¹⁸ F. FURET, « Les indicateurs et les rythmes de l'alphabetisation en France », *Annales ESC*, May-June 1974, in collaboration with W. SACHS.

starting with men and subsequently spreading to women as well, and secondly to evaluate the originality of the 19th century description "can only read" which introduced a quite new hierarchy, distinct from the descriptions "reads and writes" or "able to sign his name". A number of regional studies have also been undertaken, in particular in Upper Normandy, Champagne, Poitou, Seine and Marne, Nord and elsewhere. They confirm the exceptional decline in literacy during the revolutionary period and the enormous difference between the ways in which men and women were taught. They also indicate that there was a break in the late 17th century in the progress of literacy, and that after the general increase of the first half of the 18th century there was little progress, and in the case of men even a decline, in the years preceding the Revolution.

Taken as a whole these studies have provided considerable information on the factors influencing the spread of literacy, even if they have not as yet given any causal explanation. They have indicated the importance first of two essential "internal" factors — family and school. They have also examined the influence of such external factors as the effect of belonging to a certain socio-professional group, of coming from a certain place of residence (town or country), or of the process of industrialization or urbanization.¹⁹ Also of importance are local dialects and secondary languages, the "culturizing" role of the army in the 19th century, and the practical function of religion, especially in teaching how to read.

A study of the 1847 *Inquiry into the Postal Service*²⁰ in which the number of letters, printed matter and journals received or despatched during a period of 15 days in every commune (unfortunately towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants were excluded from the survey) was recorded, will also make it possible to sketch out for the rural areas a geography of written communications in the mid-19th century.

The study of the contribution of schools to the spread of literacy also throws light on certain institutional aspects of elementary education in the 18th century (e.g. the study of schoolmasters' contracts, synodal statutes etc.) as well as in the 19th century (childrens' schooling, attendance, performance of schools etc.).

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This over-schematic survey neglects certain areas of activity which do not easily fit into the main themes which have been treated in this article, but which do nevertheless deserve mention. They include the preparation of an atlas of the geographic distribution of domestic animals (J. Bertin, J.-J. Hemardinquer, M. Keul, W.G.L. Randles), and ethnological study of

¹⁹ Using the data available in the *Statistique Générale de la France*.

²⁰ Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. français, Fr.

daily life in contemporary Italy (Mme D. Schnapper), a study in the historical anthropology of Bantu Africa (W.G.L. Randles),²¹ a toponomastic and onomastic inventory of Byzantine Italy (A. Guillou), studies on Spanish and native patterns of cultural assimilation in the Americas in the 16th century based on the *Relaciones Geograficas de Indias* (J.-P. Berthe) and the work of the Centre Alexandre Koyré (P. Costabel, R. Taton) and of the *Centre de documentation d'histoire des techniques* (M. Daumas).

²¹ *L'Empire de Monomotapa du XVe au XXe siècle* (to be published by Mouton in 1975).

