

Summaries of articles

Demographic crises in XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries France

F. LEBRUN

The repetition of crises is one of the most distinctive features of French demography in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries. They had an effect not only on mortality, but also on marriage rates and conceptions. They originated from the threefold scourge of disease, starvation and war. The plague, until its disappearance in the 1660's (apart from the Marseille outbreak of 1720), dysentery, typhus, small pox, etc., suddenly broke out from time to time. Food shortage and consistent high prices generated subsistence crises which affected on demography. Last, civil and foreign war, at least up to 1660, also generated such crises. However, most of the demographic crises of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries resulted from epidemics, of which the most serious were caused by both food shortage and disease. Beyond their origins and their (provisional) timetable, their effects on mortality, marriage rate and conceptions should also be surveyed.

Demographic crises in an urban population : the case of Bordeaux (end of XVIIth-end of XVIIIth centuries)

J.-P. POUSSOU

The traditional notion of the role of means of subsistence has been much qualified over the last generation. This study examines the question with reference to the urban population of Bordeaux.

When one studies the annual data, there would seem to be important correlations between demographic crises and subsistence crises. But when one examines the same data more closely on a monthly or even a trimestrial basis, such a view becomes untenable. This applies even to 1693-1694 or 1709-1710, concerning which, incidentally, it would be better to talk of a series of crises ranging from 1706 to 1713.

If one takes into consideration urban diversity by distinguishing the graveyards of the centre of town, of the outskirts and of the hospital, differences at the level of monthly or trimestrial developments make it impossible to use the classical schema of the direct role of the high cost of living. The epidemic is responsible for the deaths, even if its appearance or development can be directly related to food problems. In any case, the seasonal nature of increases in the death-rate is obvious : they correspond to seasonal increases in death-rate due to epidemics.

Envy in the Middle Ages

M. VINCENT-CASSY

A concept not to be found either in literature or in art before the XIIIth century, envy evolved in conjunction with the growing awareness of the sin which followed in the wake of the church's decision in 1215 to require annual confession. Men of the middle ages,

however, could only conceive of envy in terms of its most external aspects. It was associated with slander in the 13th ; with covetousness in the XIVth ; and with hatred in the XVth, making it a temporal instead of a spiritual sin. Supplanted by avarice and eventually relegated to the penultimate position in the last of the seven deadly sins, after the Black Death envy came to be seen as the guiding force behind all human behaviour and the explanation for the wars and rivalries which then divided France. Simultaneously, it became the sin associated with men who sought, not money itself, but the ostentatious finery which money could buy and who would stop at nothing to achieve that goal even though they would never get the satisfaction of having obtained it.

**A sanctuary and its saint in the XIXth century,
Jean-Marie Baptiste Vianney, priest of Ars**

Ph. BOUTRY

For 41 years, Jean-Marie Baptiste Vianney (1786-1859) was priest in a rural parish in the Dombes. The conversion of the village, which he embarked on in 1818, created a haven of christianity immune from the contaminations of the "age". This conversion rested upon the veneration inspired by the exceptional personality of the "holy priest", and upon a pastoral strategy based on the family, the support of the municipality, the sense of locality, and respect for the autonomy and homogeneity of peasant society. It bred a unanimous, fervent, piety, free from the contamination of folklore. But to what extent could this sanctuary or refuge, untouched by its age, act as a model for the latter ?

The pilgrimage to Ars, which grew up after 1830, and which had become the most important in France by the time of the saint's death, offers the same ambiguous message. What these catholic crowds flocked to see was a man canonised in his own lifetime ; they thus gradually contributed to the hagiography of a holy priest, a missionary, a confessor, prophet and thaumaturge. The fervour of the crowds that came to Ars obviously reflects the vitality of religion in XIXth century France, but it also reflects the convergence of believers upon a sanctuary of exceptional note.

The recruitment of senior civil servants in 1901

Ch. CHARLE

Analysis of a sample of 613 senior civil servants in 1901 leads to the conclusion that the process of democratization of recruitment in this category had slowed down in comparison with the first half of the XIXth century. Not only did the bourgeoisie continue to dominate the category, but the hierarchy of different corps remained unchanged. Even so, the political situation under the Third Republic did reflect a certain number of changes. Senior civil servants connected with the political personnel (prefects, the upper echelons of the judiciary, the Conseil d'Etat) came from social backgrounds comparable to those of the deputies and senators, and received preference in their careers. In contrast, members of the more socially-closed corps (Cour des comptes, Inspectorate of Finance), who were less politically dependent, experienced greater difficulty in obtaining promotion to the top ranks of the civil service. Lastly, the technical corps were the first signs of an emergent meritocracy, allowing certain individuals of humble origins to rise to high position through seniority.