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The Economic Modernization of France, by Roger Price

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ROGER PRICE. *The Economic Modernisation of France*. A Halsted Press Book. New York: John Wiley and Sons. 1975. Pp. 235. \$17.95.

Roger Price begins his synthesis of the recent research in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French economic history by rejecting conventional periodizations and by de-emphasizing politics as a factor in economic development. In contrast to similar works—notably those of Tom Kemp and Milward and Saul—that identify the French Revolution and the Napoleonic empire as an economic and political watershed, Price denies the social and economic importance of the events of 1789–1815. In his view the *ancien régime* continued economically until the advent of railroads transformed the market structure of France by destroying compartmentalized regional markets and by creating a single national market in the 1850s. For Price this is the key event in the process of modernization whereby the preindustrial French economy, after developing to its natural limits in the first half of the nineteenth century, gave way to the emerging industrial economy between 1850 and 1880.

Certainly there is much to recommend this interpretation. Indeed, it would be hard to overestimate the impact of the railroad on the economy of any European country in the nineteenth century. But, in Price's hands, the argument is somewhat one-sided. While stressing the railroads' influence on agriculture, industry, commerce, banking, and population, he neglects to explore the process by which the railroads came into being in the first place. As a result, we get a good picture of how the structure of the French economy was changing in the mid-nineteenth century, but only a partial explanation of why it was changing.

Since the book will likely be considered for classroom use, it is only fair to note that it is not particularly well written or well edited. The text suffers from too many one-sentence paragraphs and from a lack of continuity between paragraphs. Some passages are incomprehensible (note the opening sentence of chapter 2), and some are ungrammatical (see the first sentence under "Capital Investment," p. 141). Typographical errors crop up with irritating frequency. On the other hand, the theme is clear and consistent, and there are extensive bibliographies accompanying each chapter.

In sum, the book may not be the definitive work on French economic modernization, but as an introduction to the subject its merits generally outweigh its faults. It is unfortunate that the extent of its use may be limited by an exogenous factor, the price. At \$17.95 for 226 pages of text, notes, and bibliography, it is overpriced by any standards.

The impecunious—that is, most faculty and students—can only hope that a paperback version will be forthcoming.

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MICHEL VOVELLE. *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIII^e siècle: Les attitudes devant la mort d'après les clauses des testaments*. (Civilisations et mentalités.) Paris: Plon. 1973. Pp. 697.

This pioneering study of the changing attitudes toward death in Provence in the eighteenth century has not received the widespread recognition in American historical circles that it merits. A masterful example of quantitative social history based on an analysis of a sample of some two thousand wills found in departmental archives, Michel Vovelle's work typifies the best of the new school of religious studies in France, a school that has abandoned the classical narrative account to investigate the religious experience in all its manifold dimensions. Rather awkwardly labeled as "historical religious sociology," this pluralistic approach explores the labyrinths of popular religion, plumbs collective mentalities, and weighs the psychology of the religious experience.

Vovelle adds important nuances to the thesis of Maurice Agulhon (*La sociabilité méridionale*, 2 vols., Aix-en-Provence [1966]) that a profound mutation occurred in the *sensibilité collective* in Provence, a mutation toward laicization. The touchstone for charting this shift in collective mentality is the behavior of notables at that crucial time in their lives when they were writing their wills. Vovelle notes a profound change in their attitude toward death as reflected in the decreasing concern with the "baroque" rituals of elaborate funerals, legacies for perpetual masses, and burial in particular holy places. In this individualization of attitudes toward their funereal trappings Vovelle sees the signs of a crumbling of the society of orders, with its emphasis upon the observance of death in a fashion prescribed by the deceased's rank. Signs of this change are seen in a decline in the weight of candles stipulated to be lighted, a decrease in invocation of the Virgin, and a trend toward informality in clothing the body.

In a broader context this book gives support to the thesis that the dechristianization movement is not to be dated from the onset of the Revolution; instead, if defined as a partial detachment from ecclesiastical traditions, the movement clearly begins earlier in the age of the Enlightenment. Yet, anticipating the nineteenth century, one is reminded that the quantitative decline in adhesion to the Catholic cult was accompanied by a qualitative purification within the Church, a phenome-