

Un certain manque de clarté de la part de Peter Laslett risque d'encourager d'autres chercheurs à établir des comparaisons sur la taille moyenne du ménage ou sur l'incidence relative des familles conjugales. Pourtant, ces statistiques, même comparatives, révèlent fort peu des processus dynamiques qui produisent les familles à un moment, car de grandes différences de processus peuvent mener à de petites différences dans les pourcentages. Ce sont derrière ces statistiques-là que se trouvent les phénomènes qui expliquent les changements, les différences et le rôle des processus familiaux. On hésite cependant à terminer sur une note trop critique car Peter Laslett a joué le rôle de pionnier dans la nouvelle histoire de la famille et du ménage et on lui doit beaucoup.

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YVES DURAND. — *Les fermiers généraux au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971).

In the last twenty years historians have benefited from a number of studies on governmental and military personnel of Old Régime France. Most of these works focus on royal administrators and judicial officers. In 1953 H. de Frondeville published two important studies on the Parlement of Normandy,¹ and in 1956 François Bluche's *Les magistrats au Parlement de Paris au XVIII^e siècle* appeared. Bluche followed up his monograph on the *parlementaires* with studies of Louis XIV's *secrétaires* and the *Cour des Monnaies* officials of the eighteenth century.² André Corvisier improved our knowledge of military men in the Ancien Régime with his work on army personnel.³ The royal provincial intendants were the topic of an inquiry by Vivian Gruder,⁴ and Jean Meyer produced valuable sketches of the members of the Parlement of Brittany. Meyer's work on the Breton nobility as a whole can be regarded, perhaps, as fundamentally prosopographical in nature. Jean-Pierre Samoyault made an important contribution with his research on the secretaries of state for foreign affairs,⁵ as did Philip Dawson with his exhaustive examination of the *bailliage* officers in Burgundy.⁷ All these works proved most useful. In one area of the literature, however, a gap existed. No attempt had been made to investigate the personnel of the great financial institutions of the old monarchy.⁸

¹ H. de FRONDEVILLE, *Les conseillers au Parlement de Rouen* (Rouen: 1953); and *Présidents au Parlement de Normandie* (Rouen, Paris: 1953).

² François BLUCHE, "L'origine sociale des secrétaires d'État de Louis XIV (1661-1715)," *XVII^e Siècle*, no. 42 (1959), pp. 8-22; and *Les magistrats de la Cour des Monnaies au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: 1966).

³ André CORVISIER, "Les généraux de Louis XIV et leur origine sociale," *XVII^e Siècle*, No. 42 (1959), pp. 23-53; and *L'Armée française de la fin du XVII^e siècle au ministère de Choiseul* (Paris: 1964), 2 vols.

⁴ Vivian GRUDER, *The Royal Provincial Intendants; a governing elite in eighteenth-century France* (Ithaca: 1968).

⁵ Jean MEYER, *La noblesse bretonne au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: 1966).

⁶ Jean-Pierre SAMOYAULT, *Les bureaux du secrétariat d'État des affaires étrangères sous Louis XV* (Paris: 1971).

⁷ Philip DAWSON, *Provincial Magistrates and Revolutionary Politics in France, 1789-1795* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1972).

⁸ We have considerable prosopographical literature on some financiers, but no work focusing on any of the four principal institutions. Guy CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET, *Les financiers de Languedoc au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: 1970); H. LÜTHY, *La banque protestante en France* (Paris: 1959-1961, reprinted, 1970); H. LEGOHÉREL, *Les trésoriers généraux de la Marine (1517-1788)* (Paris: 1965); J. SAINT-GERMAIN, *Samuel Bernard, banquier du roi* (Paris: 1960); R. DUBOIS-CORNEAU, *Pâris de Montmartel, banquier de la cour* (Paris: 1917); A. DELAHANTE, *Une famille de financiers au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: 1881), 2 vols; J.-P. CHARMEIL, *Les trésoriers de France à l'époque de la Fronde* (Paris: 1964).

Yves Durand's *Les fermiers généraux au XVIII^e siècle* has tried, in part, to fill the gap. The four main royal financial institutions of the 18th century were the Receipts of the Domain, the Administration of the Aids, the Royal General Tax Farms, and the Receipts of Finances. The men comprising these institutions supervised the collection of crown revenue, and they procured credit for the government. Durand's accomplishment is to have presented a first-rate prosopographical study of the most important financiers in prerevolutionary France—the tax farmers.

The scope of Durand's work is broad; and in many respects the tax farmers are examined in great detail. Whether inquiring into their duties, fortunes, and careers, evaluating their writings, or examining contemporary opinion about them, Durand is thorough. His readers will find *Les fermiers généraux* something of an *histoire totale*, of a single social group. It is the combination of scope and depth that will make *Les fermiers généraux* the standard work on the subject for a long time to come. The reader learns a great deal about the occupation of the tax farmers (pp. 118-124), their social origins (98-114), their amassed wealth (129-174); the reader obtains a clear idea of what contemporary opinion thought about them (387-441), and we learn of their own views on royal finance, culture, and society (553-609).

It is perhaps something of an injustice to search for a dominant motif of a richly detailed book of 664 pages. Nevertheless, *Les fermiers généraux* is fundamentally an effort to determine the relative place of the tax farmers in the structure of eighteenth-century French society. Much of Durand's researches in the genealogical collections of the *Bibliothèque nationale* and in the *Minutier Central* has this objective in mind.

An attempt such as this presupposes a certain agreement as to the nature of the social structure, and Durand encountered, not unsurprisingly, difficulties in locating this. The ideal way to go about positioning the tax farmers within the social structure is first to make a comprehensive examination of the financiers, and then to fit their social characteristics into the structure of their society. Unfortunately, Durand could not accomplish this, because he lacked, as he readily admits (p 177), an objective study of the structure of society to serve him. Durand was thus forced to devise an alternative approach, that of permitting contemporary opinion to formulate his social model. Using treatises by Domat,⁹ Mirabeau,¹⁰ Mercier,¹¹ and others,¹² Durand ranked the tax farmers in a social hierarchy. He then rounded out the views of the treatises with the ideas of numerous popular writers—poets, satirists, playwrights, pamphleteers, and memoirists.

Durand uses much of his genealogical and notarial research to correct contemporary images of the tax farmers presented in literary and popular writings. For example, ideas on the social origins of the tax farmers were badly in need of examination. Eighteenth-century opinion advanced two views concerning the origins of the tax farmers. The voices of popular culture—that is, pamphlets, plays, satires, and poems—insisted that the tax farmers descended from lowly servants-in-waiting or lackeys. The tax farmers themselves took an opposite view, asserting their origins from the old medieval nobility (p. 287). However, Durand's own genealogical researches prove the inaccuracy of both sets of assumptions. A full half of the tax farmers descended from *manieurs d'argent*

⁹ Jean DOMAT, *Les lois civiles dans leur ordre naturel* (Paris: 1697), 2 vols.

¹⁰ Marquis DE MIRABEAU, *L'ami des hommes, ou Traité de la population* (Avignon: 1756-1758).

¹¹ J. Louis Sébastien MERCIER, *Tableau de Paris* (Amsterdam: 1782-1788), 12 vols.

¹² Charles LOYSEAU, *Cinq livres du droit des offices suivis du livre des seigneuries et de celui des ordres* (Paris: 1610); Charles-François-Nicolas LE MAITRE DE CLAVILLE, *Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme considéré dans tous les âges et dans toutes les conditions* (Paris: 1734), 2 vols.

(money handlers: receivers, treasurers, cashiers, etc.), while about an eighth had *robe* (judicial) origins. "Truth lies," concludes Durand, "neither with the authors of public opinion, who wanted to see the tax farmers as lackeys or sons of lackeys, nor with the financial families themselves, who wanted to believe themselves illustrious descendants of *la noblesse d'épée*" (p. 287).

Though Durand criticizes popular opinions of the tax farmers, he accepts uncritically the hierarchical structure of society propounded in numerous eighteenth-century treatises. Durand's inspiration for using such sources stems from the influence of his teacher, Roland Mousnier. Mousnier believes that the ensemble of values upheld in the Ancien Régime gave its form to society. Men whose value systems presupposed a hierarchical structure of society tried to reproduce the hierarchy in their own acts; and it is these acts which collectively formed the structure of society. In the Ancien Régime parents married off their children in accordance with a scheme of social values built upon hierarchical principles. The acts of marriage and procreation then molded values into material reality.¹³

The notion of a hierarchy, however, was not the only contemporary view of the social structure. Robert Mandrou has shown that some popular literature (*livres de colportage*) divided society into three groups — outlaws, the dominated, and the dominators.¹⁴ Excluding the outlaws, who were clearly beyond the framework of organized society, social structure was perceived as dualistic. Indeed, Ossowski has shown the pervasiveness of the dualistic conception of society.¹⁵ Social consciousness in the eighteenth-century was considerably more varied than allowed by either Durand or Mousnier. The works of J. Meslier, G. Winstanley, G. Babeuf, and Rousseau are only the most striking examples.¹⁶ If we are to use examples of contemporary social theory to help explain the formation of social structure, it seems only fair to use the whole of the theory, and not just selected parts.

Specialists on eighteenth-century France will raise a few questions about *Les fermiers généraux*, notably Durand's use of certain sources. His handling of family fortune estimates is one such question. Durand relies extensively on thirty-five *partages de succession* in order to assess the size of family fortunes of the tax farmers (p. 132). *Partages de succession* were legal divisions of estates among the testators' heirs, and the documents imposing such divisions are found in the notarial archives; Durand's *partages* are all located in the *Minutier central des notaires*. Thanks to Durand we know that 223 men became tax farmers from 1726-1791 (p. 104). Since he has found thirty-five of their successions, Durand has disposable papers for no more than one-sixth of all the tax farmers. Is it really possible to draw modular conclusions from such a slender base of evidence? This is a hard question to answer. Anyone who has ever looked for *partages* in the notarial archives will respect Durand's thirty-five discoveries. Certainly he was not helped by the incompleteness of the collection of seals of the Commissioners of the Châtelet, which are often the tool enabling historians to find *partages*.

¹³ Roland MOUSNIER, "Le concept de classe sociale et l'histoire," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, vol. 48, no. 4 (1970), p. 456. Cf., "Les concepts d'ordres, d'états, de 'fidélité' et de 'monarchie absolue' en France de la fin du XV^e siècle à la fin du XVIII^e," *Revue Historique*, vol. 247, no. 2 (1972), pp. 289-312.

¹⁴ Robert MANDROU, *De la culture populaire aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: 1964).

¹⁵ S. OSSOWSKI, *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness*. Translated by Sheila Patterson (London: 1963). On an earlier period, N. COHN, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: 1957), but in several editions.

¹⁶ J. MESLIER, *Testament de Jean Meslier* (Geneva: 1764); George SABINE, ed., *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley* (Ithaca: 1941); G. BABEUF, *Journal de la liberté de la presse...* (Paris: an II, III).

Be that as it may, Durand draws a firm conclusion from the thirty-five successions. The forms of wealth held by the tax farmers were quite diverse, and it was the diversity of their property that firmly integrated the tax farmers into the society of the Ancien Régime (p. 174). Their most important assets were loans to the Royal General Tax Farms (34.17% of their combined assets), seigneurial estates (19.04%), and private letters of change, obligations, notes, and other negotiable instruments (14.10%) (p. 137). The remaining 33.69% of the tax farmers' holdings included investments in venal offices, crown bonds, house furnishings, jewelry, and silverware. The disposable fortune of twenty-nine tax farmers at death averaged 2,707,052 livres, an immense sum, but well below what many contemporaries thought they were worth (p. 133).

On the whole, Durand has made a positive contribution to our knowledge of eighteenth-century society in general, and to our understanding of financiers in particular. *Les fermiers généraux* deserves a thorough reading.

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MAURICE AGULHON. — *Une Ville ouvrière au temps du socialisme utopique: Toulon de 1815 à 1851*. Paris et La Haye, Mouton, 1970.

Cet ouvrage constitue le premier tiers publié d'une imposante thèse de doctorat intitulée « Un mouvement populaire au temps de 1848: Histoire des populations du Var dans la première moitié du 19^e siècle », dont les deux derniers fragments ont entre-temps paru chez d'autres éditeurs¹.

En présentant son étude sur Toulon, sous-préfecture d'un département resté frontalier jusqu'en 1860, M. Agulhon précise qu'il a dû détacher ici de ce monde terrien à structuration micro-citadine qui distinguait la Basse-Provence, le cas singulier d'une « ville spécialisée par la présence de l'arsenal de la Marine... [dont] la vocation était éminemment nationale... [et la] population ouvrière... proprement industrielle » (p. 5).

Reconnaissons que l'accroissement démographique et les difficultés opposées à l'agrandissement urbain ainsi que les transformations à la fois techniques et humaines enregistrées à l'arsenal depuis 1835 environ conféraient à l'agglomération des traits d'une incontestable originalité. Le lecteur se demande toutefois si celle-ci ne se trouvait pas atténuée par l'origine fréquemment provençale et terrienne des travailleurs embauchés après 1840, le rôle premier des métiers civils traditionnels dans les organisations ouvrières jusqu'en 1845, la place éminente des notables locaux « de gauche » dans la propagation des idées socialistes aussi bien que le cheminement de la démocratie par la structure verticale d'un patronage culturel bourgeois avant 1850, tels qu'analysés dans *La République au village*.

Outre ce difficile problème de définition des mentalités urbaines populaires, signalons celui, non moins ardu, de la mutation de l'opinion politique des foules muettes qui retient surtout l'attention de l'auteur. C'est par une triple démarche qu'il entend réunir en un faisceau complexe les éléments composant le soubassement de cette flambée rouge de 1848, qui n'épargna pas Toulon, au demeurant moins fortement « blanc » au temps de la Monarchie censitaire que le Midi pris dans son ensemble.

¹ *La République au village (Les populations du Var de la Révolution à la Seconde République)*, Paris, Plon, 1970, et *La vie sociale en Provence intérieure au lendemain de la Révolution*, Paris, Société des Études robespierristes, 1970.