



Panel

11.3. Innovation and change in European agriculture via the spread of new crops from the 16th to the 19th century. Part II

Panel organiser: Moriceau, Jean-Marc, University of Caen, France // Olivier, Sylvain, University of Caen and University of Perpignan, France // Chaussat, Alain-Gilles, University of Caen, France

The development of new crops in Europe was a contributing factor to the numerous changes observed in European agriculture from the 16th to the 19th century. Some crops were unknown until cultivation. Others had already been present for a long time, but were introduced later into existing cropping systems. In such cases, the novelty doesn't lay in the plant itself, but in its increased use. The phrase "new crop" covers these two scenarios and concerns human food as well as fodder and non-alimentary uses. What was the impact of these new crops on existing farming systems? What were the contributing factors or obstacles to their propagation. Did these types of crops become established? Were these crops made durable? How did they affect the populations that cultivated them? This panel proposes to study the emergence, development and spread of these new crops. It may also include some methodological talks about the historical available sources and also the ways the change and the diffusion can be mapped.

Chair: Moriceau, Jean-Marc, University of Caen, France

Thursday, 22 August 2013 // 1430 – 1630 // Session 11 – Room A-122

Paper

11.3.1. Study of the changes arisen from the introduction of buckwheat in the rural population in Western France (16th to the 19th century)

Chaussat, Alain-Gilles, University of Caen, France

Buckwheat arrived in Lower Normandy and Brittany at the end of the 15th century, and entered agricultural life in these regions to become their main crop. This contribution will focus on the emergence of this "new crop" and, more widely, on the various changes it triggered in the western areas of France. Such changes concern agriculture first, particularly with the integration in the crop rota-

tion system and more widely in an agrosystem based on polyculture. The shorter growth cycle of buckwheat (June-September) and its much larger yields compared with cereals in cold earth allows its crop in granitic areas. The whole society is affected then: tithes (taxes levied on the harvest), servitudes, the acceptance of (physical) milling, property and land, food (sufficiency and gastronomy) etc. Buckwheat is becoming a true symbol of identity to a western part of France.

11.3.2. The story of the relationship between farmers and the potato in France (16th to the 19th century)

Charras, Florian, University of Grenoble, France

The potato plant is commonplace today, it is present on all tables. However, there are less than two centuries in France, when few people would have applauded when they saw the beautiful smoking chips in their plate. Two hundred years ago the potato was a despised and rejected tuber, the unloved plant of the Ancien Régime in France. Few farmers were willing to cultivate or eat them. Potatoes remained little known until the eighteenth century, but became in a few years the essential plant for the survival of rural people. The question this paper poses is: how did we get from a total rejection to an enthusiasm for the potato? On what factor decided the farmers to cultivate it, to sell and to eat it? The crucial question is, why did the french reject the potatoe so long while other european countries have adopted it much earlier?

11.3.3. Creation of a factory farm in Normandy with the object of cultivating the beetroot for distillation to produce 90° alcohol, 1858-1879

Birée, Patrick, University of Caen, France

In January 1858 Jules César Houel (1818 – 1876), a descendant from a family of merchants of Alençon, bought the Avoise estate composed of many farms with a total 220 hectares of land to create a factory farm. The object was to cultivate the beetroot during the summer months and distilling the product to 90° alcohol in winter in accordance with the model called "Champonnois". The estate had grown in 10 years to a size of 362 hectares. A big job of draining and enriching the soil was then realised, raising and leveling the land in the process. The agricultural activity of Avoise then consisted of the cultivation of wheat, oats and the raising of beef cattle. The work of men and animals was complimented and aided by the input of machines which were for that time very precise. Around 1872, the engineer noted that the industrial activity of Avoise was living its last years of profitability. In effect, the price alcohol had dropped just like that of the wheat. A new method of production was needed for the farm. In 1876 Jules César Houel died and left the farm to his only son Gervais Auguste Jules. In 1879 the new owner stopped the distillation of the beetroot to dedicate himself to the raising of beef cattle and breeding percheron horses.

11.3.4. Potatoes in southern Poland: spread and impact on demography to the mid-19th century

Miodunka, Piotr, Department of the Economic and Social History of the Economic University in Krakow, Poland

The aim of the paper is an attempt to determine the chronology and the way the potato crop spread in southern Poland (western part of the Galicia province, part of the Austrian Habsburgs monarchy from 1772 to 1918). Generally speaking, potatoes became well known in Poland at some point between the middle of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, although research concerning the origins of potato crop in the Polish territories still has not clarified many issues e.g.: the chronology and ways of introduction, which social class (peasants, burghers or nobles) were the pioneer in the process and, finally, if the new crop had a noticeable impact on the health condition and demography of the population using it. At first, in the paper I will summarize the studies relating to the economy of noble estates in former western Galicia at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries in search of the origins of potato cultivation. Then, there will be a review of available historical sources dealing with the question. Finally, on the basis of vital records of a small town, where potatoes have been grown at least since the 1780s, it will be discussed whether there was any impact of the new crop on the town's demography until the 1880s (when demographic transition began in Galicia).

Participants

Birée, Patrick

Doctoral fellow in University of Caen Basse-Normandie. Member of the Centre for Quantitative Historical Research (CRHQ, UMR-6583) and the rural division of the Caen's humanities research centre. Thesis about the mills in Normandy supervised by Jean-Marc Moriceau. Teacher in the Archives site of the Orne department. Secretary of the SHAO (local history and archeology association of the Orne department).

Charras, Florian

PhD student teacher UPMF, Grenoble IILARHRA, UMR 5190.

Chaussat, Alain-Gilles

Doctoral fellow (scholarship of county Basse-Normandie) at the University of Caen Basse-Normandie. Thesis supervised by Jean-Marc Moriceau of "The role of buckwheat in the history of populations, in the Massif armoricain and its fringes, 17th-19th centuries". Member of CRHQ, (UMR-6583) and "Pôle Rural" of Caen. Formation in Art history, Archeology and History (University, Paris X). Member of the board HSR (Association of Rural History and Society). Member of the board CRHQ (Centre for Research in quantitative history). Member of "Groupe Meule" (Collective project of research of millstones).

Miodunka, Piotr

Doctoral dissertation at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow; author of "Community of small cities of south Lesser Poland from the 16th to the 18th century". He published, among others, the book (as co-author) "History of Wojnicz town from the 16th to the 18th century" and the source publication "Liber copulatorum of St Matthew's parish in Mielec 1762-1777".

Moriceau, Jean-Marc

History Professor at the University of Caen Basse-Normandie. Member of IUF (University Institute of France), Chairman of HSR (Association of Rural History and Society), Chairman of "Pôle Rural" in Caen (Research group in rural history, geography and sociology).

Olivier, Sylvain

Dr. Sylvain Olivier is a teacher in a high school in Montpellier (France) and adjunct professor in history at the University of Perpignan (France). He works on the mediterranean agriculture and environment from the end of the Middle Ages to the 20th century. Ph.D. thesis (2012): "On the fringes of agricultural space. Fallow lands and broom in the Lodévois (17th-19th century)", supervised by Jean-Marc Moriceau, CRHQ-University of Caen.

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