

7.1 Poverty in rural societies in southern Europe

Room 103

Convener and Chair: Julie Marfany

7.11 Rosa Lluch – Peasants feeding the poor in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

The Almoina of the cathedral of Girona, founded in the thirteenth century, in the context of greater recognition of poverty, distributed bread to the poor throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This distribution was paid for by the rents collected from a large number of rural estates and those who lived and worked on them, the majority of whom were of servile status and paid dues on the basis of this status. Some of them, however, also made voluntary donations to the Almoina. The question for this paper is how peasants were affected by this role as providers for the poor? They were well aware of their status but we do not know, for example, whether they too could benefit from the Almoina, nor what happened when their land produced less than expected (a frequent occurrence in the fourteenth century). Nor do we know if, in moments of crisis, they opted for mutual aid amongst themselves, or sought aid elsewhere. Some did abandon their lands, which were taken over by kin or neighbours. All of this has to be situated in the context of the ‘Hundred Years War’ of the Catalan countryside (as Pierre Vilar termed it), a war led by peasants of unfree status.

Rosa Lluch is lecturer in medieval history at the University of Barcelona. Since her PhD, her work has focused on peasant wars (the *remences*) of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with reference to the broader context of feudalism and agrarian society as a whole.

7.12 Gilles Postel-Vinay – Family support and local welfare: how to mitigate the effects of phylloxera

In European rural societies in the past, the (limited) support the impoverished or ill could receive came from different institutions. Among those, the (self-sufficient?) family and the networks linking households certainly played an important role and, as a result, this situation may have implied significant differences between northern and southern regions. Yet it seems that other institutions mattered too so that, in northern as in southern Europe, welfare provision was more generally a mixed – mostly local – economy.

One way to test this hypothesis could be to contrast welfare provision in different rural areas – some in northern, some in southern Europe. Rather, this paper will consider one region and therefore one type of family, in the face of a particularly dramatic income shock: the phylloxera crisis. If the impoverished, in this case, the victims of this income shock received very different support depending on the local welfare policies, then the regional effect (family structure) may have been overestimated.

A forthcoming paper provides estimates of the long-term effects on height and health of the phylloxera crisis. The paper examines the effects on the adult height, health, and life expectancy of children born in the years and regions affected by phylloxera. The shock did decrease height in the long-run. We find that, at age 20, those born in affected regions were about 1.8 millimetres shorter than others. This estimate implies that children of wine-growing families born when the vines were affected in their regions were 0.6 to 0.9 centimetres shorter than others by age 20. This is a significant effect since average heights grew by only 2 centimetres in the entire nineteenth century. However, we find no other effect on health, including infant mortality, life expectancy, and morbidity by age 20. This paper intends to go one step further by investigating whether or not the impact of the shock varied according to the support provided by the municipal charity offices (*bureaux de bienfaisance*).

Gilles Postel-Vinay is head of research at the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique and director of studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. His major publications include *La terre et l'argent: l'agriculture et le crédit en France du XVIIIe au début du XXe siècle* (1998) and, with P. T. Hoffmann and J. L. Rosenthal, *Priceless markets: the political economy of credit in Paris, 1660-1870* (2000).

7.13 Enric Saguer – Welfare practices in the Catalan rural world. An exploration of children and old people sheltering on the masos during the first half of the twentieth century

In Catalonia, historically, charity institutions basically have had an urban character, not only because of their geographic location but also for the segment of population who benefited from their services. The rural world could seem an institutional desert regarding the assistance provided for the poor and perhaps so it was if we only refer to the main public or religious institutions. However, many oral and written testimonies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also indicate the existence of sheltering practices on the *masos*, the type of family-run farm that predominated in north-eastern Catalonia. The beneficiaries of these practices were usually children and old people, which indicates that poverty situations were related not only to the social distribution of resources, but also to the vital cycle of individuals and family units. Also, it seems that, with certain frequency, there was some kinship relation between the sheltered and the housing family, a fact that reinforces the ideas about the role of intra-familial solidarities and the model of the extended family in the structure of the Catalan rural society.

The goal of the present paper is to reconstruct these rules from a double perspective. On the one hand, reviewing oral and written biographies that describe the presence of this practice on the *masos*; and, on the other hand, analysing a single census from 1946 with the aim of tracking the presence of this practice during the first half of the twentieth century (considering that the individuals given shelter often carried out work tasks in the family unit and can be confused with regular workers).

Enric Saguer Hom (b. Girona, 1964) is a Doctor in History and Lecturer in Economic History at the University of Girona. He has published several studies on the transformations of the contemporary Catalan rural world. They focus in particular on the evolution of the structure of property, the management of large property, transformations in the process of agricultural work, the tenant farming system, etc. He has also worked on environmental history themes, particularly those concerning the material fluxes of farming systems (nutrients, water resources...) and the historical evolution of the rural landscape. Currently is also president of the Associació d'Història Rural de les Comarques Gironines.