



Rural History 2013

International conference of the European Rural History Organisation (EURHO)
University of Bern, UniS, Schanzeneckstrasse 4, 19–22 August 2013

With 300 contributions from Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas

www.ruralhistory2013.org

Organised by the Archives of Rural History (ARH) and the Swiss Rural History Society (SRHS)

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Rural History 2013

Conference Programme
Abstracts of all Panels and Papers

University of Bern, UniS

19 – 22 August 2013

9.5. Rural Resilience to Disaster. Part II: Warfare

Panel organiser: van Bavel, Bas, Utrecht University, Netherlands



Warfare often caused destruction of crops and capital goods, grave losses in livestock, a decline in agricultural production, and the disruption of food trade. This session analyzes what responses were applied by war-hit rural societies. One aspect is the application of institutional instruments, including lease arrangements, customary deductions and investment schemes, and how these enabled them to cope with the effects, or not, especially in the long run. A main question is whether regions characterized by market-oriented tenant farmers and big landlords, through the variables investigated, were better able to cope with adverse effects of war than peasant societies with strong communal organizations. A similar question pertains to the role of the state, for instance by way of its fiscal and administrative arrangements. Again, the long-term perspective will also allow us to analyze how war affected the institutional organization. Did it stimulate institutional innovation, and did institutional changes in their turn positively or negatively affect economy and society? Economic recovery may be measured by the develop-

ment of lease prices, output figures or wealth assessments. Another aspect which is covered is the changes in the social distribution of wealth, which may be seriously affected by the effects of war, and how these changes affected the potential of these regions for recovery. For instance, did the availability of resources and wealth, and its distribution, allow for technological responses to the destructions of war, or not?

Chair: van Bavel, Bas, Utrecht University, Netherlands

Wednesday, 21 August 2013 // 1400 – 1600 // Session 9 – Room A 027

9.5.1. The impact of the Italian Wars (1494-1559) on the rural areas of northern Italy

Alfani, Guido, Bocconi University, Italy

Di Tullio, Matteo, Bocconi University, Italy

The Italian Wars (1494-1559) mark a turning point in Early Modern Italian history. Traditional historiography underlined their political-institutional significance, as a final outcome of the Wars was that some of the main Italian states lost their independence falling under a "foreign" domination. Recent historiography has focused instead on the economic, social, demographic and cultural consequences of the Italian Wars. This contribution will analyze their economic consequences (which cannot be understood without considering all the other aspects mentioned above) for the rural areas of northern Italy. This is an innovating perspective, as past research has been done mostly on the consequences for the cities. An overall view will be presented, with reference to different areas. The case of the Geradadda, a boundary area between the State of Milan and the Republic of Venice, will be analysed in particular detail. We will show that local societies were not inactive in the face of episodes of war, or in the face of socio-economic changes triggered by wars. On the contrary, they organised ways in which they could co-operate in defence of local resources, for example by developing innovating credit systems and encouraging a process of redistribution, albeit not an egalitarian one.

9.5.2. The effects of military destruction in late medieval Flanders: explaining regional differences

Erik Thoen, Ghent University, Belgium; Kristof Dombrecht, Ghent University, Belgium; Lies Vervaeet, Ghent University, Belgium; Tim Soens, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Everywhere in Europe, during the Old Régime, military destruction of capital (land and crops) was part of daily life and this was also true in the former County of Flanders during the late middle ages. However, in the longer term the consequences of wars were even within Flanders different from one area to another. Indeed, in the areas where long term structural changes took place, the wars speeded up the structural long-term changes of the society that were not only caused by wars. This can be demonstrated when coastal Flanders is compared to inland Flanders. In coastal Flanders, from the 14th century on, ecological problems due to a structural overpopulation in the classic middle ages was slowly destroying the peasant society. Here war destruction was much more catastrophic in the long term than in inland Flanders where a 'stronger commercial peasant society' had developed which could overcome military destruction. In the structurally weaker area of coastal Flanders on the other hand, only a smaller elite could survive with support of absentee landowners; here wars had more important long term consequences.

9.5.3. Venetian rural communities during the „Italian Wars“: Institutional evolution and tightness of the rural economic system

Ongaro, Giulio, University of Verona, Italy

In 1517 the Republic of Venice finally completed the reconquest of its mainland dominion after the catastrophic War of Cambrai (1509-1517). This war highlighted the importance for the safety of Venice itself the logistical and financial support from rural communities. Their desire for autonomy from the dominion's cities married with government needs to produce two consequences. First, they were more extensively and actively involved in the management of state military apparatus and direct taxation. Second, this involvement developed into formal recognition in the mid sixteenth century with the birth of the Corpi Territoriali, institutions each representing the rural communities of a whole province (contado). As well as managing military and fiscal obligations directly, they achieved a partial, gradual but significant erosion of urban control over the countryside, including a progressive rebalancing of the sharing of those obligations. War represented the driving force in these institutional and administrative changes, but a key role was played by the economic weight achieved by the leading contado towns and villages, mostly with a marked commercial and manufacturing profile. They bore the impact of the war and managed to take advantage of it by their stance in satisfying effectively the Republic's military and fiscal needs. The analysis of the account books of a community which was among the promoters of the Corpo Territoriale of Vicenza can help shed light on how this occurred, illustrating the action undertaken by rural institutions in this situation and the role played by an emerging rural bourgeoisie.

9.5.4. Rurality and Warfare: Portugal in the context of the Peninsular War (1807-1811)

Couceiro, Pedro, Institute of Polytechnic Bragança, Portugal

This paper aims to analyze the impact of the state of war experienced by rural populations during the Napoleonic wars that Portugal suffered between 1807-1811, a period known as the Peninsular War. The repercussions of this sequence of armed events could not have been more traumatic. In fact, the French invasions of Portugal appear as a violent hurricane that devastated the whole country and, directly or indirectly, have shaken the structures of the Ancient Régime. Firstly, because they voted the kingdom to a governance problem, relegating to the local power the mission of organizing the defense and protection of populations; secondly, because it meant a huge economic constraint. The depopulation of rural communities caused the rupture of economic and commercial relations between cities and the countryside, and at the same time, it increased the number of the discontent among various sectors of society. These adverse effects extended themselves to the whole territory, and contrary to what might be expected, the isolation of rural communities did not serve as protection. It rather caused a greater exposure of the rural heritage and therefore greater vulnerability of their populations affected by the passage and fixation of the armies.

Participants

Alfani, Guido

Guido Alfani is Associate Professor of Economic History at Bocconi University, Italy and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow, UK. He is a member of Dondeña Centre for Research on Social Dynamics and chief editor of the journal *Popolazione e Storia*. His research interests include economic inequality, social alliance systems, historical demography (particularly epidemics and famines). He is the principal investigator of the ERC-funded project EIMITE-Economic Inequality across Italy and Europe, 1300-1800.

Couceiro, Pedro

Pedro Couceiro is PhD student in History, University of Porto. Current position: Lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences at The School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (Portugal). Principal research interests: political and social history of the late modern period.

Di Tullio, Matteo

Matteo Di Tullio: PhD in social and economic history from Bocconi University (Milan, Italy) 2010. Current position: Post-doc researcher at Bocconi University, as member of the ERC project EIMITE-Economic Inequality Across Italy and Europe.

Ongaro, Giulio

Giulio Ongaro (University of Verona) studied at "Ca' Foscari" University, Venice, where he obtained a Master's degree in modern history (2011), grade 110/110 with laude. Current position: PhD candidate in Economic History, University of Verona (2011-2014). Principal research interests: Military history, economic history and rural history of the Early Modern period (Northern Italy).

Thoen, Erik

Erik Thoen is professor of rural and environmental history at Ghent University (Belgium). He is a specialist of pre-modern agriculture and rural society in North Western Europe, and founder and chair of the CORN - Comparative Rural History of the North Sea Area - Research Network.

van Bavel, Bas

Bas van Bavel is professor of Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages and head of the section of Economic and Social History at Utrecht University. His main research interests include long-run changes and divergences in economic and social development, and long-run institutional change, mainly in a comparative perspective.