

raises an interesting point about Sister Chicoine's methodology. Over and beyond written documentation, she is ready to appeal to the witness of "constant oral tradition". The community holds its own history, and the reader should pause to consider how imposing oral tradition can be in a structure as permanent and solid as this. Sister Chicoine herself can remember most of the years of this century; she is able to refer back to Sister Sainte-Henriette, whose history of the Congregation, which appeared in 1910, contained information gathered from "contemporaries of contemporaries" (p. 231) — a collective memory, then, which reaches back into the eighteenth century.

After the heroic beginnings, the most interesting part of the book comes at the end. Imperceptibly, oral tradition merges into living memory, and the feeling and flavour remains of a way of community life which is now passing into history. The visits from the Mother House of nuns and students, the joys and pleasures of a day in what was still the country, the excitement of the first automobile ride, and of the first electric light — whether the recollection is her own, or that of her community, it comes across full of life and atmosphere. Sister Chicoine should be commended, not only for her painstaking research into the documents, but for her own testimony. The museum at Pointe-Saint-Charles is well worth a visit, if not in person, then at least through her book.

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PETER CLARK, ed. — *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600-1800*. London: Hutchinson, 1984. Pp. 359.

JAN DE VRIES — *European Urbanization 1500-1800*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984. Pp. xvii, 398.

Both books under review treat chronologically similar periods, and present overlapping findings on the history of urbanization in early-modern Europe. Both, for example, show that central and western Europe — and England in particular — were much more urbanized before 1800 than was previously believed. Both agree that immigration from the countryside rather than natural increase, was the engine of urban population growth until well into the nineteenth century. Both emphasize a major reason why towns failed to reproduce themselves: the pronounced imbalance between male and female numbers. The surplus of females resulted in a high degree of celibacy, which contributed to negative fertility. Finally, both books paint a picture of relative social stability accompanying dynamic growth throughout most of the period.

So much for the similarities: in almost every other respect these books are sharply different. De Vries' is a work of macro-social history, which advances the study of cities to a higher conceptual level. Heavily statistical, it is none the less accessible to the non-numerate reader, because the conclusions are arrived at in a clear and well-organized fashion. De Vries' argument that cities can be better understood if studied as networks or systems rather than in isolation from one another, is entirely convincing, based as it is on a scrutiny of the structure and demographic experience of the 379 cities known to have reached a population of 10,000 or more between 1500 and 1800. The picture that emerges is one of continuity and stability, extending even into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The great era of city building in the high Middle Ages endowed Europe with 3,000 or 4,000 towns. After that time there was very little town creation until the late eighteenth century, and even then the new towns numbered only a few hundred. Over the long term there have been few changes in the urban hierarchy. Cities that were large in 1500 remained large in 1800 and later. Very few small cities have succeeded in overtaking their larger neighbours.

Of course the tale is not exclusively one of continuity, but most of the discontinuity that does take place occurs between 1600 and 1650. In this half-century Europe's centre of gravity shifted

decisively and permanently from the Mediterranean to the north-west. (In the late nineteenth century there is another lesser shift away from the Atlantic seaboard to central Germany.) Ravaged by plague and economic failure, the Mediterranean cities so declined in population that even the increase in the north was not sufficient to produce net urban population growth for Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century. Owing to the decline of Italy and the enfeeblement of the Spanish empire the cities of the Mediterranean suffered a loss of what de Vries terms "potential", or gravitational pull in relation to other cities.

On the other hand the long-term stability of the European urban system is startlingly confirmed by a night-time satellite photograph in 1977. The splotches of light show urban concentration exactly where it must have existed at the end of the Middle Ages: in Northern Italy, and in the low countries and northern France. The only "new" swath of light stretches north-west from London up to Liverpool — the result of England's rapid urbanization between the end of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth centuries.

Before 1800 there was an absolute ceiling on urban growth, produced by seed-yield ratios that did not permit a farmer to support more than one non-food producer, and also by the negative fertility of cities. Sharlin's argument that early-modern cities *did* reproduce themselves demographically is rejected after careful consideration. Indeed, so much did the cities soak up the fertility of the rural and farm regions, that the faster they grew, the *slower* Europe as a whole grew. However, once cities achieved a positive rate of natural increase in the nineteenth century they lifted the ceiling on urban growth from 40% to the almost 100% that prevails today. It was this "vital revolution", much more than rural-urban immigration, suggests de Vries, that explains the growth of cities since the mid-nineteenth century.

Jan de Vries' is a book rich in insights, which will undoubtedly have a stimulating effect on urban studies. If there is anything at which one can cavil, it is the superabundance of tables, some of them repetitious, and the presence of some puzzling graphs which are inadequately explained (e.g. on p. 256).

Clark's collection is by contrast, a piece of micro-history. Inevitably in a book of essays, some offerings are stronger than others. Clark's wide-ranging introduction furnishes a useful overview, reminding us for example, that by 1800 England had become one of the most urbanized nations on earth, with 31% of its people inhabiting towns of over 2,500. Peter Large, in a stimulating essay on the Birmingham region, demonstrates the symbiosis between agriculture, and industrialization. The growing prosperity of agriculture made land so valuable, that metal workers found themselves forced to concentrate more and more in towns. The mixed economy of agriculture and cottage industry declined, with the unpleasant consequence that workers lost much of their bargaining power, and found themselves vulnerable to the fluctuations of the industrial economy.

Peter Borsay develops a theme first adumbrated more than a decade ago by Phythian Adams in a seminal essay on urban ritual. While public ceremony became more military, political and patriotic, and less religious, it was far from moribund in the early-modern town. A distinctively plebeian culture emerged, boycotted and despised by the respectable classes. Much of this culture — like football matches and cruel sports — contained a strong component of aggression, and expressed social conflict rather than consensus. But by expressing conflict in a ritualized way these plebeian activities actually contributed to social stability.

A quite different aspect of continuity is revealed by C. W. Chalklin's researches into church building. There were two great eras of ecclesiastical building in English history: the high Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. What is striking therefore is that the outlay on church building between 1660 and 1800 was higher than for any other category of public building. City dwellers apparently continued to spend the lion's share of their public money on churches rather than town halls, market halls, assembly rooms, hospitals, poor houses, or any other type of communal edifice. Paid for partly by taxes and partly by voluntary contributions, the cost of churches was spread over large numbers of people, and did not impose a serious burden upon them. Perhaps the conventional

wisdom about the secularization of culture is in need of rethinking, or at least redating in light of Chalklin's researches.

Both books are excellent examples of their genre, but there is little doubt that *European Urbanization* will have the greater intellectual impact.

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LUCA CODIGNOLA — *Vatican : Archives de la Sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande*. Ottawa, Archives publiques du Canada, Division des manuscrits, Instrument de recherche n° 1186, 1983. 19 microfiches.

En 1977, les Archives publiques du Canada et le Centre de Recherche en Histoire religieuse de l'Université Saint-Paul mirent sur pied un projet d'inventaire des documents d'intérêt canadien conservés aux Archives de la Sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande à Rome. Fondée en 1622 dans le double but de répandre la foi chez les infidèles et de la protéger dans les pays où l'autorité civile n'était pas catholique, cette Congrégation romaine eut l'Eglise canadienne sous sa dépendance jusqu'en 1908. On comprend dès lors l'importance de ce dépôt d'archives pour qui s'intéresse à l'histoire religieuse d'ici. La tâche du dépouillement des archives et de la préparation de l'inventaire fut confiée à Luca Codignola, professeur à l'Université de Pise, et la traduction française fut assurée par le Père Ovila Gadouas, o.m.i.

L'instrument de recherche dont il est ici question est le résultat de la première phase du projet qui s'intéressa plus particulièrement aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles. Codignola a dépouillé au-delà de 1 900 volumes aux Archives de la Propagande et il a répertorié tous les documents qui, entre 1622 et 1799, concernaient « des faits ou des individus de l'Amérique du Nord française et britannique, i.e. de la totalité de ce qui est maintenant le Canada, la partie orientale des Etats-Unis actuels, particulièrement la Louisiane, la région nommée plus tard Ohio et Mississipi et enfin l'Ouest américain » (Introduction, p. 1).

De plus, l'auteur a également inscrit au répertoire des documents se rapportant à des personnages ou événements qui ont influencé l'Eglise canadienne, même s'ils ne furent pas impliqués directement dans le déroulement de son histoire.

Le jeu de 19 microfiches regroupe quelque 2 436 entrées qui constituent les volumes 2 à 6 de l'inventaire. Le premier volume paraîtra plus tard : il s'agit d'une longue introduction générale au répertoire qui comptera plusieurs chapitres. Il faut dire cependant, pour le bénéfice des utilisateurs, que trois des principaux chapitres de cette introduction sont déjà parus, en entier ou en parties, dans divers périodiques depuis 1979. Voir à cet effet, *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 33, n° 2, (sept. 1979), pp. 197-214 ; *Bulletin du Centre de Recherche en Civilisation canadienne-française*, n° 21, (déc. 1980), pp. 1-21 ; *Société canadienne de l'histoire de l'Eglise catholique. Sessions d'étude*, vol. 50 (1983), pp. 73-88 et *Storia nordamericana*, vol. 1, (1984), pp. 5-33.

Les volumes 2 à 6 de l'inventaire correspondent respectivement aux séries *Acta* (mf. 1.3 à 3.3), *Scitture Originali Riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali* (mf. 1.6 à 6.6), *Congregazioni Particolari* (mf. 1.1), *Lettere* (mf. 1.4 à 4.4) et *Congressi* (mf. 1.5 à 5.5) des Archives de la Propagande. Dans chacun des volumes, on retrouve une introduction qui présente le contenu général de la série et qui la situe par rapport aux autres séries inventoriées, une liste des abréviations et des sigles, le titre des volumes consultés, les renvois aux autres séries, les références bibliographiques et un index. Les fiches d'entrée, pour leur part, contiennent les renseignements suivants : série et sous-série ; volume, folio ou page ; langue ; année, mois, jour, lieu de provenance et auteur ; destination ;