

Reproduction Sociale and *Élite Values*: *Obituaries and the Élite of Apt (Vaucluse), 1840-1910*

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Obituaries provide a previously unexplored source for the study of the socio-professional composition and value systems of local élites. Based on a systematic survey of obituaries from the 1840s and 1900s in a conservative, clerical weekly from southwestern France, the Mercure aptésien, this article shows how socio-economic and political transformations in the second half of the nineteenth century affected representations of a provincial élite. Demonstrating the penetration of modern themes into the corpus of élite values, it cautions against exaggerating the ability of remnants of the ancien régime élite to persist up to the Great War.

Les notices nécrologiques constituent une source jusqu'ici inexploitée pour l'étude des élites locales: on y trouve des données relatives à leur composition en termes socio-professionnels et des indications sur le système de valeurs qu'elles y projettent. Se fondant sur des notices parues au cours des années 1840-49 et 1900-09 dans un hebdomadaire cléricale de province, le Mercure aptésien, l'auteur dresse un parallèle entre les changements survenus dans le discours consacré aux notables défunts et dans les transformations socio-économiques qu'a connues la sous-préfecture d'Apt pendant la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle. Au vu de la pénétration de thèmes «modernes» dans le système de valeurs propres au milieu considéré ici, les «anciennes» élites semblent avoir éprouvé de sérieuses difficultés à se reproduire jusqu'à la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale.

The study of élites has again found favour among historians.¹ A recent, sometimes anti-Marxist and anti-Republican, rereading of the French Revolution addresses the question of the nature and composition of *ancien régime* élites, drawing attention as well to the continuity of *ancien régime* social structures beyond the revolution.² Paralleling previous investigations by Marxist historians of the persistence in post-revolutionary France

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1. Harold PERKIN, "The Recruitment of Elites in British Society since 1880", *Journal of Social History*, XII (1978): 220.

2. Guy CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET, *La Noblesse au XVIII^e siècle: de la féodalité aux Lumières* (Paris: Hachette, 1976). See also François FURET, *Penser la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978). For a partial bibliography of the historiographic debate prior to 1972 over the French Revolution, see Michel VOVELLE, *La Chute de la monarchie 1787-1792* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), pp. 272ff. See also by the same author, "L'élite ou le mensonge des mots", *Annales ESC*, XXIII (1974): 49-72. Although essentially a revisionist historian, Patrick HIGONNET attempts a fair-minded synthesis between the revisionist and orthodox positions in his *Class Ideology and the Rights of Nobles during the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), introduction and pp. 256ff.

of remnants of the feudal regime,³ a new emphasis is now placed upon the continuing importance in nineteenth-century France of the old aristocracy.⁴ Extending this approach to Europe as a whole, Arno Mayer has recently portrayed nineteenth-century European society as essentially immobile, dominated up to the outbreak of World War I by the feudal élites of the *ancien régime*.⁵ In his perspective, European social history is a case study in the social reproduction of élites.⁶

Mayer's analysis appears to be inspired by a model of society developed by German historians who have for some time been insisting upon the essential conservatism of pre-World-War-I German society. In his important study of the German mining town of Bochum, for example, David Crew depicts what amounts to a caste society whose lack of social mobility was presented as a norm to the working classes by the local élites.⁷ German society was undoubtedly more fluid than suggested by this example;⁸ but as Dahrendorf, following Veblen, has pointed out, those who were upwardly mobile conceived of themselves as isolated individuals aspiring after assimilation into the establishment. Emulating the élite, they accepted its norms and politics. Thus the circulation of German élites served only to reinforce existing conservative tendencies and to impede rather than hasten social change.⁹ To what extent, however, does this model apply to France? Although recognizing that in a Europe dominated by monarchies French political institutions were unique, as was middle-class control of the state bureaucracy,¹⁰ Mayer seems to dismiss the effect of political power upon social structures and forces a recalcitrant France into the mould of his interpretation of the European past.¹¹

3. Pierre MASSÉ, "Survivances des droits féodaux dans l'Ouest", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, XXXVII (1965): 270-98; Albert SOBOWL, "Survivances 'féodales' dans la société française au XIX^e siècle", *Annales ESC*, XXIII (1968): 965-86.

4. CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET, *La Noblesse*, pp. 19, 84; FURET, *Penser la Révolution*, p. 41. See also David HIGGS, "Politics and Landownership among the French Nobility after the Revolution", *European Studies Review*, I (1971): 105, and Thomas BECK, "The French Revolution and the Nobility: A Reconsideration", *Journal of Social History*, XV (1981): 219-33.

5. Arno MAYER, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), especially chap. 2.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

7. David CREW, "Definitions of Modernity: Social Mobility in a German Town, 1880-1901", *Journal of Social History*, VII (1973): 67.

8. Historians stressing the different manifestations of anti-modernism in Germany have insisted upon the importance of social mobility, upwards and downwards, in pre-war German society: S. VOLKOV, *The Rise of Popular Antimodernism in Germany: The Urban Master Artisans, 1873-1896* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 53-60, 75-94; and David SCHOENBAUM, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966), pp. 2-8.

9. Ralf DAHRENDORF, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 51; Thorstein VEBLEN, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Random House, 1934), pp. 199-245. An argument along the same lines for Restoration France is developed in David HIGGS, "Social Mobility and Hereditary Titles in France, 1814-1830: The *Majorats-sur-demande*", *Histoire sociale—Social History*, XIV (1981): 29-47.

10. MAYER, *The Old Regime*, pp. 81, 129, 177.

11. *Ibid.*, *passim*, esp. p. 105.

Arguing from the specific case of a local élite in Provence, this paper will demonstrate the inaccuracy of this socially static view of French history. While confirming that important aspects of *ancien régime* mentality and social relations did persist well beyond 1789, it will caution against exaggerating the capacity of survival of the old élites. Daniel Halévy's suggestion in his now classic study¹² that the early years of the Third Republic marked the end of the old notables will prove a more fruitful perspective than Mayer's for understanding change in a local élite.

Survival of an élite, it must be stressed, should not be reduced to dynastic continuity. For Bourdieu, social reproduction pertains to classes and social structures more than to individuals.¹³ In his study of contemporary French élites, E. Suleiman likewise eschews genealogies and argues that the survival of élites be approached from the point of organization.¹⁴ In this essay, as in Chaussinand-Nogaret's study of eighteenth-century élites,¹⁵ values are retained as the criterion of group continuity. The values which élites use to legitimize their privileges and exercise of power define a collective identity and their place in society. Élite values are envisaged in this essay as a substratum whose permanency assures that of the group or, conversely, whose erosion is a sign of unsuccessful reproduction.¹⁶

Obituaries published in regional newspapers provide one particularly fruitful and, until now, neglected source through which élite values may be analyzed over time. By their selection and their varied lengths, obituaries offer both a convenient catalogue of local notables and a criterion of prestige ranking within this group.¹⁷ Assuming the form of short biographies, they are in fact idealized accounts of the deceased. The newspaper carrying the obituaries should be considered as a prism through which the image of the élite is refracted. The selection and the length of notices and the qualities attributed to the deceased reflect editorial *parti pris*. The editor in turn is responsive to the class affiliation and political outlook of his readers. Obituaries project in this manner an image consonant with an identifiable segment of society.

12. Daniel HALÉVY, *La Fin des notables* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1972).

13. Pierre BOURDIEU and Jean-Claude PASSERON, *La Reproduction. Éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1970), p. 20.

14. E. N. SULEIMAN, *Elites in French Society: The Politics of Survival* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 10.

15. CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET, *La Noblesse*, pp. 54ff.

16. For a discussion of group continuity, see P. A. SOROKIN, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, vol. 1, *Fluctuation of Forms of Art* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1962), pp. 153-56.

17. As in W. L. WARNER et al., *Democracy in Jonesville* (New York: Harper and Row, 1949), and W. L. LUNT, *The Social Life of a Modern Community* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), élite status is considered as a function of the "prestige" of a group in the community. However, taking account of criticisms of Warner, for example, by Stephan THERNSTROM, *Poverty and Progress. Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 229ff., I interpret social prestige against the background of objective indicators of economic and political power.

A small regional centre in the southern French department of the Vaucluse, situated seventy kilometres east of Avignon, the town of Apt provides the setting for this study. Thirty years ago, Lawrence Wylie justified his choice of Roussillon, a village within twenty-five kilometres of Apt, as the site for his ethnological study on the grounds that the Vaucluse represented at the time a statistically average department in France.¹⁸ It is tempting to apply the same reasoning to nineteenth-century Apt. Although its population progressed with difficulty from 5,500 to 6,300 individuals during the nineteenth-century, Apt was a subprefecture possessing an influence exceeding its size. It may, moreover, be argued that Apt was more representative of nineteenth-century France than were the major centres. In 1911, not only was the majority (56 percent) of the French population still living on farms or in hamlets and villages of less than 2,000 individuals but also large cities were the exception: "La France urbaine c'est essentiellement celle des cités comprises entre 5 000 et 20 000 habitants, sous-préfectures, préfectures parfois."¹⁹ On the border between upper and lower Provence, Apt resembles many medium-sized towns of southern France. The disproportionate electoral, and hence political, influence which southern France enjoyed during the Third Republic makes it all the more appropriate for the study of élite values.²⁰

During the Restoration and the July Monarchy agriculture provided the basis of the Aptesian economy. It occupied forty percent of the male population of the commune in 1841 (Table 1). Most of those engaged in agriculture lived in hamlets and on isolated farms in the outlying areas of the commune (*population éparsée*). Even within the townsite (*population agglomérée*), however, almost one-quarter of the male population was listed as exercising an agricultural occupation. Although a decline from one-third at the time of the 1804 census, the agricultural presence within the townsite of Apt remained strong, characteristic of the semi-rural Mediterranean cities of France.²¹

Apt was not merely an agricultural village. A sub-prefecture and canton seat, it was host to a small contingent of administrative personnel gravitating about the sub-prefecture and the civil court. It also exercised economic influence over its region. Because of its location between two geographically different but complementary regions, Apt was able to impose itself as a communication centre in the north-south flow of agricultural goods. Its merchants exported regional agricultural production, especially wheat which was often ground to flour, to the cities of lower Provence including Marseilles. Cheaper rye from upper Provence was

18. Lawrence WYLIE, *Village in the Vaucluse*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. x, xi.

19. Madeleine REBÉRIOUX, *La République radicale? 1898-1914* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973), p. 211.

20. MAYER, *The Old Regime*, p. 167. Henri DUBIEF, *Le Déclin de la III^e République* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976), p. 86, makes exactly the same point in discussing the influence of the southern French electorate on interwar French economic and ideological development.

21. Maurice AGULHON, *La République au village* (Paris: Plon, 1970), p. 26.

Table 1 Occupational Structure by Gender and Residence, Apt, 1841

Occupational Category	Males						Females					
	A Townsite		B Outlying Area		A + B Commune		A Townsite		B Outlying Area		A + B Commune	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Industry, commerce	23	1.6			23	1.2						
Professions, management	101	7.2			101	5.4	16	2.3			16	1.5
Employee	30	2.2			30	1.6						
Crafts, trades	634	45.2	31	6.6	665	35.5	102	14.5	5	1.4	107	10.2
Unskilled labour	62	4.4			62	3.3	3	0.4			3	0.3
Personal service	30	2.2			30	1.6	179	25.4			179	17.0
Agriculture	330	23.5	420	88.8	750	40.0	242	34.4	328	94.8	570	54.3
Inactive *	192	13.7	22	4.6	214	11.4	162	23.0	13	3.8	175	16.7
Total	1,402	100.0	473	100.0	1,875	100.0	704	100.0	346	100.0	1,050	100.0

Source: Archives départementales du Vaucluse, 6 M 37, nominal census for Apt, 1841.

Note: The commune is an administrative unit encompassing a townsite (*population agglomérée*) and outlying areas (*population éparse*).

* The only inactive individuals included in this table are household heads without specified occupation.

brought into the canton as a substitute cereal.²³ Merchants were also co-ordinating some local "industrial" production such as textiles, organized as a domestic industry involving the surrounding villages. Taking advantage of the clay soils of the canton, Apt became as well a regional centre in the production of pottery and related goods. Indeed its earthenware, along with candle wax, leather and candied fruits, were regularly shipped to the fairs of Beaucaire.²³ Finally, the subsoil of the canton was believed to contain vast quantities of riches. The Restoration and the July Monarchy witnessed continuous prospecting for sulphur, lignite and iron.²⁴ The iron deposits, in particular, raised great hopes for future regional industrial development.

Excepting the iron works which swallowed several fortunes before their total collapse in the 1880s,²⁵ most of this industrial activity remained small scale. Consequently, the social vocabulary remained somewhat rudimentary. Indeed, on the basis of the census of 1841 alone it is impossible to differentiate between independent and salaried craftsmen, and between small and large producers. Even distinctions between producers and traders were not always meaningful, and although a commercial élite of *négociants* and *marchands drapiers* may be identified from the census, many were involved in the organization of the production of goods as well as in their commercialization.

The more thorough integration of Apt into the national, and even world, economy during the second half of the century saw the collapse of most of its traditional industries. Pottery manufacturing, prosperous during the first decade of the Second Empire, was in decline after 1860, victim of a change in fashion and competition from English China.²⁶ Similarly, other activities declined and disappeared faced with the *concurrency des grands centres*.²⁷ Certain industries, however, were able to take advantage of the expanding market. The production of a reddish dye extracted from the plentiful ochre sands of the region and the manufacture

22. Archives départementales du Vaucluse (hereafter ADV), 6 M 407-10, remarks on markets and sale of agricultural products appended to the "États communaux de récoltes en grains", 1830-48. See also the statistical note on the town of Apt in the *Revue aptésienne*, 16 November 1834.

23. The total value of the exported goods came to 134,630 francs in 1828. ADV, 6 M 249, "État des produits des manufactures établis à Apt, autre que ceux destinés à la consommation locale".

24. ADV, S Fonds 6, 2, Demandes de concession.

25. Gustave Perre was forced into bankruptcy in 1841. François Gaufridy, a notable from Apt, lost much of his fortune in speculation on local industrial development generated by the iron foundries. Pauline Jaricot, founder of the movement of the Propagation of the Faith, devoted the largest part of a silk-based fortune from Lyon in the Rustrel iron works. See ADV, S Fonds 6, 2 and 6, 6. For a brief history of the financial problems of the foundries, see ADV, 3 U, Tribunal civil d'Apt, Rapport d'experts concernant l'affouage de l'usine de fer de MM. Testanière et Lanflé sur la minière de Notre Dame des Anges.

26. ADV, 6 M 435, Situations industrielles. Rapports trimestriels, especially the report of the third trimester, 1866.

27. In reference to the fabrication of felt hats, see ADV, 6 M 441, Situations industrielles, 1887. Also, for the preparation of minium, ADV, 6 M 434, Situations industrielles, third trimester, 1860.

of candied fruits assumed increasing importance during the last third of the nineteenth century, becoming the dominant economic activities in Apt by 1900. According to one contemporary, half of the Aptesian population was involved in the production of candied fruits in the pre-war years.²⁸ Aptesian manufacturers were actively present on the international markets, shipping candied fruit to England and to the United States,²⁹ ochre dyes to Russia and Germany among other destinations.³⁰

The socio-professional composition of the population on the eve of World War I reflects the transformation of Apt's economy (Table 2). Although the low technological requirements of Apt's major industries militated to some extent against concentration, and the seasonal pattern of the preparation of the candied fruit attenuated the development of a full-time labour force in this industry, there is, nonetheless, evidence of capitalist differentiation, with the appearance in the census of 1911, on the one hand, of a small but significant group of twenty-seven industrialists and, on the other, of an unskilled male and female labour force. Industrial development is also reflected in the extension of employment in middle management (*cadres moyens*) in the private sector from 0.9 to 2.4 percent of the male population. Not only private but also public sector managerial employment was expanding. Apt was becoming more of an industrial city and an administrative centre. While these functions were being reinforced, the agricultural element of the city was declining. Within the townsite agriculture accounted for only 5.8 percent of the male population and even in the outlying areas of the commune this sector, which occupied 88.8 percent of the male population in 1841, occupied only 76.4 percent in 1911.

Industrial development was accompanied in Apt by an increasing segregation of primary and secondary economic activities. It had other repercussions on agriculture, redirecting agricultural production to fruits which constituted the raw material for the candied fruit industry. Yet this impulsion was insufficient to revive an agriculture badly hit by the commercial and biological crisis of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The production of early fruits and vegetables, which had expanded dramatically in the well-irrigated plain of the Rhône since the arrival of the railroad, remained limited in the region of Apt mainly because of the lack of irrigation facilities. On the eve of World War I, agriculture in the canton was still traditional, centred on the Mediterranean triad of wheat, vine and olive with sheep as the main livestock. Farmers from Apt could look with envy at their more fortunate counterparts around Avignon. They could also leave in search, so to speak, of greener pastures. The villages surrounding Apt, affected also by the disruption of the traditional putting-out industries, lost approximately half of their

28. F. SAUVE, "Monographie des communes de Vaucluse. III, Ville d'Apt", *Annuaire administratif, historique et statistique de Vaucluse*, XXVI (1903): 54.

29. M. DERRIVE, "L'industrie des fruits confits. Son importance—Drawback—Exportation aux États-Unis—Confitures", *Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce d'Avignon*, February 1909, pp. 42-44.

30. SAUVE, "Ville d'Apt", p. 55; WYLIE, *Village in the Vaucluse*, p. 21.

Table 2 Occupational Structure by Gender and Residence, Apt, 1911

Occupational Category	Males						Females					
	A Townsite		B Outlying Area		A + B Commune		A Townsite		B Outlying Area		A + B Commune	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Industry, commerce	65	4.2	1	0.2	66	3.3	3	0.3			3	0.3
Professions, management	132	8.6	2	0.4	134	6.7	35	3.7	1	0.3	36	2.9
Employee	112	7.3	10	2.2	122	6.1	19	2.0	1	0.3	20	1.6
Crafts, trades	678	44.1	46	10.1	724	36.3	280	30.0	12	4.1	292	23.8
Unskilled labour	278	18.1	40	8.8	318	16.0	197	21.1	4	1.4	201	16.4
Personal service	37	2.4	1	0.2	38	1.9	156	16.7	6	2.1	162	13.2
Agriculture	89	5.8	349	76.4	438	22.0	56	6.0	258	88.4	314	25.6
Inactive*	146	9.5	8	1.7	154	7.7	189	20.2	10	3.4	199	16.2
Total	1,537	100.0	457	100.0	1,994	100.0	935	100.0	292	100.0	1,227	100.0

Source: Archives départementales du Vaucluse, 6 M 39, nominal census for Apt, 1911.

* The only inactive individuals included in this table are household heads without specified occupation.

population between the mid-nineteenth century and the eve of the war. Apt and its region were experiencing a deruralization of their economy and society.³¹

With some exceptions, land in the canton of Apt did not represent a lucrative investment in the nineteenth century. The hilly, irregular nature of the terrain and the less than generous endowment of the soil more or less precluded the creation of large estates. Within the commune of Apt properties of more than thirty hectares occupied only one-quarter of privately held land in 1822 when the land registry tables were drawn up; this portion was slightly higher in the other communes of the canton because of the existence of vast tracts of forest lands carved up from the earlier seigniorial holdings. Most of the large holdings in Apt belonged in 1822 to a rentier class of *propriétaires*. Members of the liberal professions and of the commercial élite also invested in land, if not in Apt where competition for land may have been too intense, in the neighbouring communes.³² The attraction of land was as much social as economic—if not more, its acquisition constituting a symbol of success for merchants and artisans.³³

This would change over the second half of the century. Already by 1855 the Chamber of Agriculture was bemoaning the lack of interest expressed by local “capitalists” in investment in land.³⁴ The agricultural depression of the eighties and nineties provoked a further decline in the status of land. Large estates were being sold or dismembered throughout this period, although new large holdings were also being assembled. By 1913 there appears to have been a thorough transformation of the Aptesian landowning families. Of the seventeen properties surpassing thirty hectares in 1913, only two estates predated 1855 and only one had been transmitted within the same family since 1822. Moreover, in 1913 farmer occupants constituted the largest single category of large landholders. The leading industrialists seemed less interested in land than had been the commercial élite of the previous generation. None owned properties of more than ten hectares. In 1900, the mayor of Apt, a manufacturer of candied fruits, owned less than five hectares.

Before 1848, because of the electoral qualifications of the censitary monarchies, land also conferred political power on the landholder. The political class at the time of Louis-Philippe was composed essentially

31. ADV, 6 M 379-88, Statistiques agricoles annuelles et quinquennales, 1854-1914. ADV, 6 M, Recensements de la population: listes nominatives, 1804, 1836-1911. The censuses are quinquennial.

32. Cité administrative du Vaucluse (Avignon), cadastre de la commune d'Apt, matrices for 1822, 1855 and 1913.

33. Examples are the acquisition in 1837 by Jules Reybaud, *faiencier*, of 32 hectares, a property formerly belonging to the de Sinety family, and the purchase in 1843 by F. Rousset, *marchand drapier*, of an estate of 46 hectares. However, the latter already appears on the land register of 1822 for the neighbouring commune of Saignon as possessing an estate of 43 hectares. Cadastre, matrices, 1822-55, folio Sinety-Reybaud; folio Rousset.

34. Archives Nationales, Paris (hereafter AN), F 20 580, Chambre consultative d'agriculture de l'arrondissement d'Apt, meeting of 30 January 1858.

of the landowning classes forming the electoral college: *propriétaires*, members of the liberal professions, functionaries, and merchants and the artisanal élite, mostly manufacturers of earthenware, entered in Table 3 under "industry". Slightly more open than the electoral lists to the commercial and manufacturing classes, the municipal councils of the July Monarchy reflect essentially the same socio-economic composition (Table 4). The narrow electoral basis of the July Monarchy and mass illiteracy—sixty percent of the male population around 1830—reduced the political process to a squabble for influence within a group of sixty to one hundred notables.

Le corps électoral, extrêmement restreint en raison du cens qui, seul, donnait accès dans ses rangs, formait dans le pays une sorte d'aristocratie qui, par quelques meneurs, s'était acquis dans chaque arrondissement [canton]

Table 3 Occupational Background of Enfranchised Voters, Apt, 1841, 1847

Occupational Category	1841		1847	
	N	%	N	%
Industry, commerce	11	19.3	17	23.6
Professions	10	17.5	16	22.2
Management	13	22.8	11	15.3
Crafts, trades	7	12.3	8	11.1
Inactive	16	28.1	20	27.8
Total	57	100.0	72	100.0

Source: Archives départementales du Vaucluse, 1 U 46, jury lists for Apt, 1840-42; 3 M 18-19, electoral lists for Apt, 1840-48.

Note: Because only electors could serve on juries, the lists of jury members and of électeurs censitaires are equivalent.

Table 4 Occupational Composition of Municipal Council, Apt, 1830-1912

Occupational Category	Percentage of Councillors					
	1830 (N = 23)	1837 (N = 23)	1843 (N = 22)	1882 (N = 22)	1902 (N = 23)	1912 (N = 22)
Industry, commerce	13.0	26.1	18.2	22.7	26.0	27.3
Professions	17.4	21.7	31.8	9.1	4.3	13.6
Management	8.7	8.7	9.1	4.5	0.0	13.6
Crafts, trades	34.8	17.4	18.2	27.2	34.8	4.6
Proprietors	26.1	26.1	22.7	36.3	34.8	40.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: Archives nationales, Paris, F II Vaucluse, 10, lists of town councillors, Apt, 1830, 1837; *Mercure aptésien*, 9 September 1843, 7 December 1902; Archives départementales du Vaucluse, 3 M 333, lists of town councillors, Apt, 1882, 1912.

une haute influence sur la direction des affaires, sur la nomination aux emplois, enfin sur toutes les faveurs gouvernementales. Le corps électoral était tout, le reste de la population n'était rien...³⁵

Even after the demise of Louis-Philippe, as one sub-prefect complained, clan conflict, rather than opinions or issues, dominated political life in the region, a legacy of the censitary monarchy.

Dans l'arrondissement d'Apt il n'y a ... ni foi, ni convictions, ni opinions politiques, il n'y a que des haines personnelles, déplorable héritage de la guerre de places qu'on s'est faite pendant vingt ans.³⁶

Nonetheless, the introduction of universal suffrage and the spread of literacy, which had become almost universal by 1900, modified these features. Apt had become Republican before 4 September 1870,³⁷ and as though to confirm André Siegfried's analysis of electoral sociology,³⁸ was supporting a moderately "radical" form of Republicanism during the pre-war years. The social composition of its municipal council likewise changed, reflecting the ascendancy of the industrial classes in the locality. The death in 1903 of one of the leading radicals and industrialists, Eugène Reboulin, and a series of minor political scandals resulted in the return of a more socially conservative although still Republican municipal council in 1912 (Table 4). Disencumbered of their poorest inhabitants by the rural exodus and somewhat isolated, the surrounding villages remained clerical and conservative slightly longer than Apt itself, although by 1900 the last bastions of clerical conservatism were falling to a socially conservative but anticlerical Republicanism.³⁹

Small, Apt nonetheless possessed sufficient regional influence to sustain at least one local newspaper, the *Mercure aptésien*, published weekly from 1839 to the 1920s. Other newspapers, such as the short-lived *Revue aptésienne*, which appeared sporadically between 1834 and 1841, and the more successful Republican paper, *l'Indépendant aptésien*, founded in the 1890s, were also published in Apt. Obviously neither could compare with the *Mercure* for longevity during the nineteenth century. Indeed, in 1841, while the *Revue* could count "à peine" thirty

35. AN, F^{1c} III, Vaucluse, 6, report of the sub-prefect of Apt on the political situation, 9 November 1852.

36. ADV, I M 684, "Rapport sur l'état des Esprits et des affaires dans l'arrondissement d'Apt", 30 March 1849.

37. As early as 1858 embattled sub-prefects complained of the political manoeuvres of the local bourgeoisie, "aveuglée par une étroite susceptibilité, fruit des éducations manquées, oublieuse des leçons du passé et ne se souvenant déjà plus des bienfaits du présent". As for the common people, "le peuple s'est laissé tromper". AN, F^{1c} III, Vaucluse, 6, trimestrial reports, 8 July 1858 and 5 April 1859. By the 1870s, the electorate was continuously returning republican municipal councils, provoking the ire of government officials who resorted to the dissolution of the municipal councils and the appointment of municipal commissions to restore the fortunes of local conservatives. See AN, F^{1b} II, Vaucluse, 10, reports of sub-prefect, 24 February 1874 and 17 October 1874. See also ADV, 2 0 3/10, list of members proposed for the "commission de mairie", 12 August 1877.

38. André SIEGFRIED, *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1964), *passim*.

39. ADV, 3 M 324, "Municipalités électives, Listes des maires et adjoints" for the Third Republic.

subscribers, the *Mercur*e already had a subscription list of 450.⁴⁰ The *Mercur*e also enjoyed good relations with the government. Dismissing the *Revue aptésienne* as being “d’une opposition indécente [et qui] foule tous les principes et déverse son venin sur tout ce qu’il y a de plus respectable”, the subprefect in 1841 had nothing but praise for the *Mercur*e, suggesting governmental support.⁴¹

Feuille rédigée dans un très bon esprit, n’est hostile à personne et respecte la morale publique et l’autorité... Il ne mérite que des éloges et c’est à bien juste titre que la cour royale lui a confié les annonces judiciaires. Il serait à désirer que le même témoignage lui fût soumis pour l’indemnisation pour toutes les insertions des communes.

The praise of the newspaper was also extended to the publisher, described during the Second Empire as enjoying “la considération publique” and “dévoué au gouvernement”.⁴²

An advocate of the concept of order, the *Mercur*e thus thrived under authoritarian regimes. Initially it was not, however, a political paper. “Il ne s’est jamais occupé de politique et s’est borné à donner quelques nouvelles locales et à emprunter à la presse quelques faits divers des plus importants.” Nonetheless, certain issues were of special concern to the *Mercur*e and its publisher. “On remarque dans les nouvelles locales qu’il donne une tendance à s’occuper plus particulièrement de ce qui concerne le clergé et les affaires religieuses.”⁴³ Indeed, from the moment of its inception the newspaper was, by inspiration, clerical. Claiming to be above factions, it espoused a mildly legitimist stance in the 1840s. During the Second Empire it became an advocate of the temporal power of the pope,⁴⁴ and despite its generally good relations with the government was admonished by the sub-prefect in 1860 for having reproduced segments of the papal address of 14 October 1860.⁴⁵ With the advent of the Third Republic, the *Mercur*e could no longer remain politically indifferent, and in 1876 submitted the surety bond of 3,000 francs required to deal with politics.⁴⁶ By the turn of the century, the *Mercur*e had become outrightly royalist, nationalist and *antidreyfusard*. Although representing a minority political position, it still maintained a respectable readership, with a press run of 600 to 800 copies and a subscription list of 250 to 500 individuals.⁴⁷

The image of society projected by the obituaries in the *Mercur*e reflects the paper’s ideological position. If the obituaries define an élite,

40. ADV, 2 T 22, letter of sub-prefect, 28 July 1841.

41. ADV, 2 T 22, sub-prefect of Apt, report for 1841.

42. ADV, 2 T 22, sub-prefect of Apt, report for 1853.

43. ADV, 2 T 22, sub-prefect of Apt, report for 1848.

44. ADV, 2 T 22, sub-prefect of Apt, report for 1863.

45. ADV, 2 T 26, sub-prefect of Apt, report for 1860, file on the *Mercur*e aptésien.

46. ADV, 2 T 22, sub-prefect of Apt, report for 1876.

47. ADV, 2 T 22, “État des journaux publiés dans le département. Tirages et abonnés”, 1898, 1899 and 1902. It would appear from the fluctuations that the numbers given are at best estimates rather than actual circulation figures.

this élite is definitely partisan, becoming more so during the divisive years of the Third Republic. It is a clerical and conservative élite. A case in point may be made with the paper's announcement of the death in 1900 of Xavier Bonnet, a prominent Republican, former deputy mayor and benefactor of the local schools. While the *Indépendant aptésien* lavished praise on the deceased, comparing him to Paul Bert and providing details of the funeral procession and service attended by the sub-prefect, the *Mercure* restricted itself to a terse comment in the *faits divers* column evoking the deceased's legacy to the schools and the civil nature of his funeral service.⁴⁸

Despite its lack of objectivity, the *Mercure* provides a source rendered all the more valuable by its longevity and consistent bias. It permits an appreciation, on the one hand, of the reality and depth of the social, economic and political transformation which Apt seems to have experienced, and, on the other, of the adaptation of conservative ideology to this transformation. To what extent were these changes mirrored in the socio-economic composition of its élite and in the values underpinning the qualities attributed to the deceased? Was the *Mercure* able to reproduce at the eve of the war the vision of an élite recalling that of the July Monarchy, or did it, despite its conservatism, have to come to terms with the values of a modern society? An affirmative answer to this last question would cast doubt on Arno Mayer's interpretation of the static character of nineteenth-century European society.

In this paper, we shall be examining obituaries published in the *Mercure* during two ten-year periods, the first from 1840 to 1849, the second from 1900 to 1909.⁴⁹ During each of these decades the *Mercure* published approximately 100 obituaries relating to residents of Apt and its canton. In the first decade, 54 percent of the obituaries concern male residents of Apt, 18 percent male residents of villages in the canton and 28 percent women. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the corresponding figures are 47, 12, and 41 percent respectively. With few exceptions, in which case the deceased is designated by the vague term "propriétaire", professions are indicated, permitting analysis of the socio-economic composition of the groups of deceased males for whom we have obituaries. This is somewhat more difficult for women because they often did not exercise professions and in many cases those of their husbands were not indicated. Nonetheless, there is sufficient information to permit a rough sketch of the socio-economic backgrounds of women receiving obituaries (Table 5).⁵⁰

48. *Indépendant aptésien*, 24 June 1900, and *Mercure aptésien* (hereafter *Mercure*), 24 June 1900.

49. These obituaries are described in greater detail in Pierre SIMONI, "Notices nécrologiques et élites locales: l'élite aptésienne au XIX^e siècle", *Annales du Midi*, LXXXVII (1975): 67-95.

50. In the 1840s the obituaries were treated by the paper as items of local news and published in a column called "Nouvelles Diverses"; in the 1900s the *Mercure* reserved a special column entitled "Nécrologies" for its obituaries. The selection and writing was undertaken by the editor, although in several instances reproductions of the funeral oration were added to his text.

Table 5 Social Background of Recipients of Obituaries
by Gender and Residence, 1840-49, 1900-1909

Socio-Economic Group	1840-49						1900-1909					
	Males				Females		Males				Females	
	Town		Country		N	%	Town		Country		N	%
	N	%	N	%			N	%	N	%		
Industry, commerce	8	15.6					13	27.6	2	16.7	8	19.6
Professions, management	21	41.2	9	52.9	9	34.6	18	38.3	2	16.7	9	22.0
Employee	3	5.9					2	4.3				
Crafts, trades	6	11.8	2	11.8	1	3.8	4	8.5			1	2.4
Agriculture							1	2.1	1	8.3		
Nobility					8	30.8					1	2.4
Clergy	2	3.9	4	23.5	5	19.3	2	4.3	1	8.3	6	14.6
Youth	5	9.8	1	5.9			2	4.3	2	16.7	6	14.6
Not given	6	11.8	1	5.9	3	11.5	5	10.6	4	33.3	10	24.4
Total	51	100.0	17	100.0	26	100.0	47	100.0	12	100.0	41	100.0

Source: *Mercure aptésien*, obituaries, 1840-49, 1900-1909.

Women appear to have formed a somewhat more exclusive group than their male counterparts. A first measure is provided by the proportion of obituaries for the two genders. While obituaries for men represented roughly 10 percent of adult male deaths in Apt in the 1840s, those for women represented only 4 percent of female deaths. In the 1900s, the difference had narrowed slightly: 9 percent compared to 7 percent.⁵¹ The social origins of the women receiving obituaries also appears more exclusive, particularly in the 1840s judging by the importance of the nobility in each group. While eight women were members of noble families, only five men were of noble origin. Industry, crafts and trades are almost totally absent from the feminine group receiving obituaries in the 1840s. In the later period this is no longer the case, but there is a significant difference in the length of obituaries for women from industrial families as compared to those from managerial and professional families (Table 6). However, with almost a quarter of the obituaries not indicating the socio-economic status of the deceased, impressions concerning élite women can only be provisional. This is not the case for deceased men.

The social-economic composition of the male élite as defined by obituaries in the 1840s presents nothing unexpected. Although not the equal of the *grands notables* studied by Tudesq,⁵² this élite is reminiscent of the imperial notabilities composed of landowners, administrators and professionals, and *fabricants* and *marchands* described by Chaussinand-Nogaret.⁵³ The average lengths of the obituaries also reminds one that the social prestige reserved for individuals still involved in production was relatively limited (Table 6). Success was obtained, or manifested, by the acquisition of land and the transfer of energies from trade to public service. Examples of this⁵⁴ are, however, too few to corroborate a Second Empire sub-prefect's dismissal of the Aptesian bourgeoisie as "exclusivement composée de marchands parvenus".⁵⁵

The obituaries depict an élite which approximates in its social-economic composition the electoral corps (compare Tables 3 and 5). There is in fact an overlap of personnel. Of the fourteen electors residing in Apt who died during the 1840s, thirteen were objects of obituaries. This contrasts with only five of the nine electors from the surrounding villages, less important, therefore, in the eyes of the *Mercure* than the town of Apt itself. Despite similarities between the two images of the élite, certain differences also exist. Members of the managerial group

51. These figures are very rough estimates based upon age-specific mortality rates calculated for the years 1835-1837, corresponding to the 1836 census, and in the immediate pre-war period (1910-1911) corresponding to the 1911 census.

52. André Jean TUDESQ, *Les Grands Notables en France (1840-1849). Étude historique d'une psychologie sociale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964).

53. Guy CHAUSSINAND-NOGARET, L. BERGERON, R. FORESTER, "Les notables du 'Grand Empire' en 1810", *Annales ESC*, XXIV (1969): 1052-75.

54. F. Rousset, *marchand drapier* in 1812, *procureur syndic* according to the obituary; F.-L. Archias, *marchand* in 1812, municipal functions including mayor in the obituary. See AN, F^{1b} II, Vacluse, 9, "Liste des cent plus forts contribuables de la commune d'Apt", 1812.

55. AN, F^{1c} III, Vacluse, 6, Rapport trimestriel, 6 July 1858.

Table 6 Indexes of Average Length of Obituaries by Social Background and Residence of Recipients, 1840-49, 1900-1909

Socio-Economic Group	1840-49			1900-1909		
	Males		Females	Males		Females
	Town Index (23.5 = 100)	Country Index (11.6 = 100)	Index (20.5 = 100)	Town Index (41.6 = 100)	Country Index (47.3 = 100)	Index (29.9 = 100)
Industry, commerce	34			138	31	93
Professions, management	183 *	90	67	113	143	155
Employee	24			74		
Crafts, trades	30	121	39	41		134
Agriculture				38	49	
Nobility **			92			194
Clergy ***	176	125	217	147	178	73
Youth	54	121		46	124	79
Not given	20	147	49	26	94	72

Source: See Table 5.

Note: The index is calculated from the average number of lines of obituaries for urban and rural groupings in the two decades.

* The average length of obituaries for professionals differed significantly from that of managers in the decade 1840-49. For seven professionals, the index is 74; for fourteen managers, it is 237.

** Five male nobles have been grouped under more specific occupational classifications.

*** For females, the category of clergy includes nuns (indexes of 286 for three nuns in the 1840s, 83 for five nuns in the 1900s) and women related by kinship to clergy (indexes of 114 for two in the 1840s, and 23 for one in the 1900s).

are better represented in the obituaries than in the censitary lists, while *propriétaires* are underrepresented. This discrepancy is an indication of the voluntaristic nature of public service. Many administrators were identified on the electoral lists as landowners. For this class then, public administration was an intrinsic attribute for the destined role of notable. By their nature, obituaries tend to dwell on this role, insisting upon those functions which had given the deceased visibility.

As well, there is a difference in the treatment of deceased electors which is suggestive of a subtle political bias on the part of the *Mercure*. The average length of the obituaries of electors assessed for more than 300 francs, that is, of those forming the political class of the Restoration, was three times the average length of all male obituaries and nine times that of electors enfranchised by the July Revolution, assessed between 200 and 300 francs. This differential may also be attributed to the conservative nature of a source which dwells upon the lives of public figures of a previous generation.

The attention paid in the obituaries to members of the clergy, their relatives and nuns both in the 1840s and at the turn of the century reflects the clerical tendency of the *Mercure*. This tendency became more pronounced in the later period. Indicative of this change, given the stronger religious attachment of women, is the substantial increase in the number of obituaries dealing with women. Also, despite a marginal decrease in the number of obituaries concerning inhabitants from the surrounding villages, the average length of these notices had increased. In three cases this increase was dramatic (Table 6). The villages had proven to be the last bastions of conservative power in the canton, succumbing one by one to the Republican and Radical onslaught of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was only natural that in a world of shrinking clerical influence the *Mercure aptésien* should seek and reinforce alliances with conservative notables throughout the canton.

Yet the vision of society that the obituaries portray by their occupational composition in the 1900s is not a conservative one. Although old-style notables, members of the administrative and judicial professions, remain strongly represented, they nonetheless have to share their prominence with deceased members of the new industrial classes. Even Eugène Reboulin, the Republican mayor and owner of an important candied fruit factory, obtains an obituary of 101 lines, well over two-and-a-half times the average length. It might be mentioned, though, that the *Indépendant aptésien* devoted its entire front page to Reboulin's death.⁵⁶ There is also the suggestion of a greater openness of the élite as portrayed by the obituaries. This change, however, is far from spectacular, restricted at first glance to the inclusion of two farmers and to longer notices for employees (Tables 5 and 6).

As important as are the changes in the social composition of the group that was the object of obituaries, the change in their content is

56. *Mercure*, 30 April 1905 and 7 May 1905; *Indépendant aptésien*, 24 June 1905.

even more striking. The themes treated in the obituaries are themselves a reflection of an evolution not only in the composition of the élite in the eyes of the clerical party, but in its relation to the population at large, in particular in response to changes in literacy rates and electoral structures.

In the 1840s the élite depicted by the obituaries was representative of a society still dependent upon small-scale production and agriculture and in which trade could be a source of enrichment. Nonetheless, the *Mercure aptésien* had demonstrated its receptiveness to the economic change that the region of Apt was experiencing during the Bourgeois Monarchy. Numerous articles dealt at length with attempts to establish a local steel industry that could exploit the iron rich deposits of the region and with the various aspects of the urban renewal which Apt was undergoing. These preoccupations are reflected in two obituaries in which the deceased are praised for their contributions to the economic development of Apt.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, these are short notices which in the last analysis remain isolated in the sample. Economic themes are otherwise rarely touched upon. Although in three short obituaries the reader learns that the deceased had led “des vies laborieuses”⁵⁸, work itself was not a particularly praiseworthy quality. Nor was social advancement through hard work. The only possible exception might be François-Xavier Rousset, a public prosecutor during the revolution whose “fortune considérable a été honorablement acquise par des mœurs austères et une sage économie”. However, the key word in the phrase is probably “honorablement”; and the lengthy notice points out that the Rousset family had been respected in Apt for over 800 years.⁵⁹

The obituaries, in fact, portray a closed society. The family is as much a source of social status as are the individual's merits. In fourteen obituaries the deceased is described as belonging to an “honorable”, and “estimable” or a “respectable” family. In a further eight notices the family is explicitly described as being an old family: “une ancienne famille”. Few themes are as frequently evoked as is this. It would appear that one was born, and did not accede, into the élite.

In the context of contemporary French political life, the importance accorded to old families assumes special significance. It constitutes a definite social and political statement involving nostalgia for the *ancien régime*. Indeed, most of the families extolled for their antique lineage were of noble origin. This nostalgia is also expressed in the language of the obituaries, in the praise of individuals for embodying “les traditions patriarcales du passé”, for providing models of “l'antique chevalerie française” or for representing “le type d'une société que les jeunes géné-

57. *Mercure*, 30 August 1840, Roubion, *cafetier*, 23 lines; 4 June 1843, Gaufridy père, *receveur des finances, fondateur des hauts fourneaux*, 18 lines.

58. *Mercure*, 26 April 1840, Cartier, *médecin*, 6 lines; 28 June 1840, Boze, *abbé*, 27 lines; and 10 September 1843, Anselme, *maître des postes*, 5 lines.

59. *Mercure*, 15 May 1840, F. Rousset, *procureur syndic*, 70 lines.

rations ne remplaceront pas".⁶⁰ Links with the past, these old noble families, dying out one by one, were "l'ornement et l'orgueil" of Apt.⁶¹ They established the tone of Aptesian society for their social graces, their "distinction", "l'exquise urbanité", and "le bon goût" were, as the obituaries point out, "l'apanage de gens bien nés et bien élevés".⁶²

The élite and in particular the nobility, shrunken as it might be numerically, retained a "social power" in Apt. It also possessed a "cultural power". In a society in which over half of the adult male population was still illiterate, culture provided the élite with a frame of reference and a means of cohesion differentiating it from the rest of the population.⁶³ Its preoccupations were numerous and far ranging. The knowledge of Greek and Latin was highly valued. A *notaire* from one of the neighbouring villages was praised for the "style élégant et correct" of a speech given many years before his death welcoming the archbishop in Latin.⁶⁴ Other members of this élite distinguished themselves by their musical or literary talents, or by books such as the secular and ecclesiastic histories of Apt written by the abbé Boze and the memoirs of the Spanish wars by the pharmacist S. Blaze.⁶⁵ In other cases the paper limited itself to evoking, and praising, the knowledge and erudition of the defunct, sometimes in short epithets concerning the individual's learning, at other times in long descriptions of his training, especially if obtained in Paris, or of his intellectual brilliance.

Mention of the deceased's cultural or intellectual achievements was made in all obituaries of individuals belonging to the administrative, the judicial and the liberal professions as well as to the clergy of Apt. Clearly, cultural attributes of this élite were as much a professional as a social requirement and served as a guarantee of its competence in the direction of local affairs. For ultimately the real force of this élite resided in its possession of political power. It was as administrators that these men best distinguished themselves.

By their praise the obituaries provide an ideological justification of the exercise of power by this élite in general, and of the censitary electoral system in particular. The wealthy property holder was essential to the state as elector and intermediary to whom a part of political power was delegated not only because of his conservative interests but also

60. *Mercure*, 5 May 1844, Mme Seynard-Clément, 13 lines; 17 and 29 August 1841, Marquis de Saporta, 47 lines; and 23 May 1847, veuve de Bernard de la Croix, 49 lines.

61. *Mercure*, 29 December 1844, Marmet de Vaumalle, 16 lines, and 22 August 1847, veuve Baronne Mézard, 19 lines.

62. *Mercure*, 23 May 1847, veuve de Bernard de la Croix, 49 lines; 1 April 1849, veuve général Duvignot, 11 lines; 17 and 29 August 1841, Marquis de Saporta, 47 lines; and 29 December 1844, Marmet de Vaumalle, 16 lines.

63. Cf. Jean-Guy DAIGLE, *La Culture en partage. Grenoble et son élite au milieu du XIX^e siècle* (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1977), p. 16, for a discussion of culture and group identity.

64. *Mercure*, 27 August 1847, Bertrand, *notaire*, Saint Saturnin, 16 lines.

65. *Mercure*, 28 June 1840, Boze, *abbé*, 27 lines, and 18 October 1844, Blaze, *pharmacien*, 46 lines.

because of his independence. Public office was a duty and not a means of personal enrichment.⁶⁶ The obituaries convey an image of the notable in accord with this principle.

In the first place, the obituaries portray an élite distinguished by its honesty and integrity. Terms such as honourable, esteemed, respectable and commendable are ubiquitous. Even a few merchants and employees, as well as most administrators, are praised for their integrity, rectitude and austerity. Among the three administrators neglected was M. Passaire, mayor of Apt during the One Hundred Days.⁶⁷ The lapsus was undoubtedly intentional.

The image of the upstanding magistrate is understandably most fully developed in the handful of longer notices concerning administrators.⁶⁸ First, they are depicted as being above parties, as possessing "noble indépendance du caractère", of seeking conciliation, of exercising moderation. Given the factionalism of Aptesian political life of the time, such qualities would be appreciated. Secondly, these magistrates are said to have been motivated by pure civic spirit and pride. It was a form of local patriotism. Their exercise of power was entirely disinterested, devoted to the welfare of the inhabitants under their jurisdiction. Like General Du vignot,⁶⁹ described as having been "le père et l'ami de ses soldats", they provided, in the words of the obituaries, an "administration toute paternelle".⁷⁰

Indeed, paternalism may be said to characterize relations in general between the population and the élite.⁷¹ Obituaries referred to members of the élite as a "protecteur" of the poor, and to their death as the loss of a "bienfaiteur", "un ami".⁷² In turn, the poor acted as intercessors for the élite, sending their blessings for the departed and demonstrating their grief, and their gratitude, by their attendance at the funeral procession.⁷³

The élite's paternalistic concern for the poor found a natural expression in charity, which occupied many of its members, especially those in administrative and judicial occupations, and women. Of the sixteen

66. Louis GIRARD, "Société et politique en France. Des notables: les conseillers généraux", *Annales ESC*, XXII (1967): 483-88.

67. *Mercure*, 27 November 1842, Passaire, *ex-maire, propriétaire*, 2 lines.

68. *Mercure*, 10 December 1843, Baron Mézard, *président de la cour de Bastia*, 350 lines; 28 April 1844, Archias, *maire*, 44 lines; 25 and 31 August, Empereur, *juge de paix d'Apt, Saint-Saturnin*, 22 lines; 25 January 1846, Avon de Ste-Colombe, *percepteur*, 75 lines; and 10 June 1849, Marin, *avocat*, 12 lines.

69. *Mercure*, 17 August 1845, Du vignot, *général*, 85 lines.

70. *Mercure*, 28 April 1844, Archias, 44 lines. Compare with the ideal biography of a highly placed public servant, in Christophe CHARLE, *Les Hauts Fonctionnaires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 9.

71. Compare with TUDESQ, *Les Grands Notables*, p. 199.

72. *Mercure*, 5 January 1845, Pallier, *abbé*, 56 lines; 6 October 1844, Giraud, *propriétaire*, 21 lines; and 29 August 1841, Marquis de Saporta, 46 lines.

73. *Mercure*, 1 April 1849, veuve Du vignot, 11 lines; 15 February 1846, Fage, *notaire*, 16 lines; 22 August 1847, veuve Mézard, 19 lines; and 23 May 1847, veuve de Bernard de la Croix, 49 lines.

notices where this theme is developed, nine concern women. They provided the personnel for different religious associations devoted to good works and, as nuns, were responsible for the various religious establishments such as the Hospice, "douce espérance de la vieillesse".⁷⁴ The structure for charitable activity was at times more informal: a countess from Toulon residing in Apt is said to have transformed her house into an improvised workshop where she and other genteel ladies made clothing for the poor.⁷⁵ Charity was both an outlet for the energies of elite women and a framework for female sociability. If it was also a means of cementing client-patron relations—the existence of which is merely hinted at in the notices—it also was seen as a Christian duty and a means of salvation.

By their charity the elite expressed their concern for the poor; in death they provided models of good Christians. They met death with "une résignation chrétienne" in anticipation of their reward. In a few cases, they provided the example of an edifying death, the culmination of an exemplary life.⁷⁶

Finally, these individuals are exemplary as parents and as spouses. The themes of the family is treated in seven obituaries, less than half as frequently as the evocation of the Christian death; but the theme was an important one, since, in conservative values, the family was the linchpin of society. The familial model was paternalistic.⁷⁷ In the obituaries the husband is undeniably at the head of the family: the wife, "le seconde" in the upbringing of the children, is "dévouée" to him, "digne" of him.⁷⁸ But at the same time the notices transmit the image of the affective family. Mothers are models of tenderness, spouses are idols for each other, and devotion to the family is also attributed to husbands and fathers.⁷⁹

In an 1835 article attempting to define the concept of "notable", the editors of the *Revue aptésienne* claimed that there existed numerous "notabilités", that each economic sector such as industry, commerce, property, medicine, law, and agriculture had its own, and that any individual who, by his talents, merit and hard work, using only honourable means, had attained a position of independence could claim to be a notable.⁸⁰ Although some themes alluded to in this article find their reflection

74. *Mercure*, 27 December 1840, Dame Delong, *supérieure de l'hospice de la Charité*, 150 lines.

75. *Mercure*, 14 November 1847, Comtesse de Simony, 31 lines.

76. *Mercure*, 27 August 1843, Bertrand, *notaire*, 16 lines, and 22 August 1847, veuve Mézard, 19 lines.

77. René RÉMOND, *La Droite en France. De la Première Restauration à la Ve République* (Paris: Aubier, 1963), p. 41.

78. *Mercure*, 14 May 1843, Mme Empereur, 74 lines; 22 August 1847, veuve Mézard, 19 lines; 1 March 1840, Comtesse de Tournon, *ex-patriote*, 24 lines; and 25 January 1846, reference to the wife of d'Avon de Ste-Colombe, *percepteur*, 75 lines.

79. *Mercure*, 25 January 1846, d'Avon de Ste-Colombe; 25 February 1849, Fayolle *officier [de la] Garde nationale*, 30 lines; and 10 June 1849, Marin, *avocat*, 12 lines.

80. *Revue aptésienne*, 9 November 1835. This concept of notabilities recalls that of sectorial élites that Adeline DAUMARD formulated for the nineteenth century in her comments on I.J. Brugmans, "L'ascension de la classe moyenne dans les Pays-Bas du dix-neuvième siècle", in *Problèmes de stratification sociale. Actes du Colloque international* (1966), ed.: Roland MOUSNIER (Paris: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et sciences humaines de Paris-Sorbonne, 1968), p. 212.

in the obituaries, the editors of these notices remained essentially indifferent to such views. The plurality of notabilities, or of élites, suggested in the 1835 articles does not characterize the élite presented by the obituaries. At the very most one might speak of a number of configurations of values defining certain segments within the élite. Otherwise by its social composition and its values, it demonstrated a certain cohesion based upon its exclusiveness. The antiquity of some of its families, its social graces, culture and exercise of power differentiated it from the rest of the population. Although no longer numerically dominated by the nobility, it remained very much an élite of the *ancien régime*, typical probably of much of provincial France of the first half of the nineteenth century.⁸¹ Although as Christians facing death and as members of families, the élite provided models for emulation, its self-justification resided in its distinctiveness and superiority.

That reference to the exclusiveness of the élite of the 1840s is not merely tautological is evident from a comparison of its obituaries with those of the 1900s. Not only is there a greater plurality of values in the notices; but also the changed socio-political context, with mass literacy and universal suffrage, has resulted in a modification in the relationship between the élite and the masses. The élite represented in the obituaries is more open to the "people", marginally so in its composition, but markedly in the values expressed. To legitimize the existence of an élite with respect to a popular electorate, the obituaries of even a traditional weekly like the *Mercure* effected a partial integration of élite and popular values.

Thus, although belonging to old families may still confer prestige, this attribute is now infrequently mentioned. It appears in only three notices and despite their importance the social reality is most faithfully conveyed in the strong regrets expressed in one notice concerning the disappearance of such families.⁸² In contrast, terms formerly of only limited importance have become significant. For example, the word "modeste", used in four notices in the 1840s, appears in fifteen. Of course, it assumes different meanings according to the context of the notice. While in a few notices it refers to the social origin or situation of the individual, in others it is attributed as a definitive virtue, "la fleur du vrai mérite".⁸³

Its prominence is nonetheless indicative of the social climate of the 1900s. The Republican paper was also insisting upon the modest condition of the deceased in its obituaries while, in one case, simultaneously commenting upon the "fortune qui est très considérable" bequeathed by the defunct to the schools.⁸⁴ Whatever the meaning conferred by the context of the sentence, "modeste" did fulfill an evident editorial purpose of providing a bridge between the élite and the newspapers' readers. Clerical

81. For another example, see the élite of Grenoble described by DAIGLE, *La Culture en partage*, p. 167.

82. *Mercure*, 13 December 1908, Mme Léon de Berluc, 58 lines.

83. *Mercure*, 31 July 1904, Argaud, *négociant en blés*, 53 lines, and 9 August 1903, Mme Dessane, 71 lines.

84. *Indépendant aptésien*, 24 June 1900.

and Republican papers alike sought to present the image of an élite with which their readers could identify. Electoral strategies rendered this tactic imperative.

Another theme largely neglected in the 1840s, but which also gains prominence by 1900, is that of work. In one-fourth of the male obituaries, the deceased are praised for having been, in one way or another, exemplary in their work. In the case of public administrators this praise reflects the professionalization of a civil service no longer manned in dilettante fashion by landowning notables. But is it otherwise in the case of subordinate personnel qualified as "bon" or "travailleur infatigable". There is in this praise an anticipation of the role that the concept of work would play in right-wing ideology of the next half-century.

But work was also regarded as a means of social mobility, which the obituaries of the turn of the century, unlike those of the 1840s, seem to exalt. It may be objected that only three industrialists were proposed as examples of self-made men.⁸⁵ Their notices, however, were among the longest among the obituaries, and in all three cases their commercial and industrial climb figures prominently in the obituary. Each is presented as a local equivalent of Horatio Alger.

Depicting society as one in which those possessing sufficient energy, determination and skill could achieve success, the *Mercure* converges in its social representation with the Republican *Indépendant aptésien*. In its obituary of Eugène Reboulin, the *Indépendant* likewise insisted upon the mayor's rise from humble origins to the position of important manufacturer, recalling, moreover, his "souches prolétariennes" and his continued commitment to the "parti plébéien". Admittedly, certain terms are more radical than those used in the *Mercure*, but clearly social mobility, which had become a Republican shibboleth, was adopted in Apt by enemies of the Republic. Although the Republican paper dressed its description in language stressing class divisions, both papers made the same use of social mobility. On the one hand, it justified the existing socio-economic structures which neither Republican nor clerical tendencies sought to overturn, and, on the other, it provided the political élites with a populist veneer. It is thus understandable that the *Mercure*, while willing to present industrialists with clerical tendencies as "fils de ses oeuvres", should not dwell on this aspect in its obituary of Reboulin.

Despite changes that had brought to the fore preoccupations reflecting an industrial society, a more traditional élite based on the administrative and judicial professions still represented an important segment of the deceased receiving obituaries. To judge by these obituaries, this segment of the élite retained some of its former attributes, but not necessarily its power.

85. *Mercure*, 31 July 1904, Argaud; 8 January 1905, Rambaud, *industriel, fabricant de fruits confits*, 50 lines; and 16 February 1902, Roux, *industriel, exploitant d'une mine de soufre*.

Life in society remained important. However, members of this traditional élite distinguished themselves in the 1900s less for qualities reminiscent of the nobility such as exquisite urbanity, but for conversational gifts and for the ability to enliven intimate get-togethers. It is as if the framework of the sociability of the élite had shrunken, this élite no longer embodying by itself "society". Although maintaining within the body of obituaries a near monopoly over social qualities (six out of seven obituaries), the traditional élite seems to have lost the social power it once had.

The spread of mass literacy may have rendered the cultural supremacy of the élite less pronounced than it had been. There was, however, no trace of this change in the obituaries. On the contrary, as Bourdieu has argued, the development of the school system may very well have increased the prestige of the culture of the élite by making it more comprehensible, desirable, but not more accessible, to the population.⁸⁶ As was the case in the 1840s, culture had often both a professional and social function. The erudition and eloquence that had enhanced the career of one lawyer also made him a brilliant and much sought-after conversationalist.⁸⁷ But the fascination that an older élite had demonstrated for Latin seems to have waned. The only dead language to receive any attention is Provençal, the language in which a regular contributor to the *Mercure* wrote his poems.⁸⁸ Although in the 1900s the most eminent cultural achievements were realized to a greater degree by expatriates such as Felibre Berluc-Perussis, Apt still had a few men of letters, its learned priest invariably termed the "Fénelon aptésien", and its inevitable local historian and disorganized collector of artifacts engaged in a much approved "culte de la tradition".⁸⁹

If cultural pursuits still served to define the élite, or at least a certain segment of the élite, and to differentiate it from the rest of the population, the cultural accomplishments of the élite no longer served as proof of its administrative competence. Quite simply, the political changes that had occurred during the second half of the century had stripped the élite defined by the obituaries of political power. In consequence, even when the values of the élite appeared unaltered, they had a quite different sense and application than in the 1840s.

For instance, honesty and integrity remained valued qualities; but in attributing them to the deceased, the obituaries were no longer implicitly justifying a given socio-political order. For if the élite were upright and irreproachable, it was in the private realm as Christians that they demonstrated these virtues. In all but one obituary of more than fifty lines, the defunct is described as having been committed "aux justes causes" or faithful to his "convictions profondes des Chrétiens". The exception

86. BOURDIEU and PASSERON, *La Reproduction*, pp. 56, 57.

87. *Mercure*, 21 November 1909, Guigou, *avocat*, 51 lines.

88. *Mercure*, 28 October 1900, Ourdan, *notaire*, 36 lines.

89. *Mercure*, 21 August 1904, Terris, *curé archiprêtre*, 112 lines, and 7 October 1906, Garcin, *greffier*, 161 lines.

concerns the Republican mayor, Eugène Reboulin. And as is evident from one lengthy obituary, the independence that members of this élite might demonstrate was now directed against the State rather than in its service.⁹⁰

Altruism and devotion to duty, as appreciated as they might be, no longer appeared as concomitants to public service. There remain a few cases of functionaries, or regional conservative notables, praised for their kindness and obliging attitude. Adding the statement that such virtues were becoming increasingly rare in public life, the *Mercure* did not intend to allow such praiseworthy conduct to redound to the credit of the bureaucracy. Virtues, thus, remained personal attributes of individuals expressing a Christian ethos, generally in their private capacity as a doctor or as a worker in the hospice.⁹¹

This ethos was also expressed as charity. No longer in a position to ensure a paternalistic administration, the élite nonetheless continued to express a paternalistic concern for the poor and to prize charitable pursuits. Some of the formulae used in the obituaries, for example, depiction of the sorrow of the poor who have lost a friend,—“sa mort laisse les oeuvres en deuil et les pauvres en pleurs”—remained much as they had been previously. However, the act of charity was often qualified in the 1900s by the adjective “discret”.⁹² And even more than before, it was a feminine act. Of the seventeen individuals noteworthy for their charity, eleven were women. Significantly, of the six men, four were industrialists.

More than any single factor, the emergence of an élite engaged in productive activities conditioned changes in the expression of the élite's paternalism and charity. Some employers proved to be models of social Christians. The director of a sulphur mine was praised for his involvement in charitable organization and for having continuously been able to “devancer les justes revendications de ses ouvriers”.⁹³ In other cases the harmony reigning between workers and employer, and the latter's popularity among his workers, was cited.⁹⁴

The *Indépendant aptésien* examined at equal length the good relations established between Eugène Reboulin and his employees. But, unlike the *Mercure aptésien*, the Republican paper linked this industrial harmony to Reboulin's modest social origins, which rendered him accessible to his

90. *Mercure*, 16 August 1908, Rousset, *conseiller, cour d'Aix*, 42 lines.

91. *Mercure*, 27 January 1901, Clément, *docteur, Saint-Saturnin*, 123 lines, and 10 December 1905, Sœur Ste-Verda, 22 lines.

92. *Mercure*, 2 March 1902, Mme Bonnet, 20 lines; 19 July 1903, Mme Madon, husband *notaire*, 105 lines; 23 June 1907, Mme Aymard, husband *notaire/maire*, 117 lines; and 13 December 1908, Mme Léon de Berluc, 58 lines.

93. *Mercure*, Mme L. de Berluc, and 19 May 1901, Marliagues, *industriel*, 265 lines.

94. *Mercure*, 16 February 1902, Roux, *industriel*, 64 lines; 16 June 1907, Caffarel, *industriel, fabricant de fruits confits*, 23 lines; 24 January 1907, Devaux, *industriel, fabricant de fruits confits*, 10 lines; and 30 April and 5 May 1905, Reboulin, *industriel, maire*, 101 lines.

workers. He was praised for his generosity in ensuring through industrial expansion continuous employment and increased well-being to his "collaborateurs". To the paternalism inspired by Catholic social doctrine as understood by the *Mercure aptésien*, there corresponds a Republican interpretation based upon a rudimentary liberal economics. The end result was the same.

Lastly, the eviction of this élite from political power was reflected in the attitude towards the family and death. Much more than in the 1840s, the family had become by the turn of the century a focus of affective emotions. It also assumed the function of refuge. For an élite alienated from society, the family constituted the most stable social institution to which to turn.⁹⁵ The theme of the family was pervasive, appearing in twenty-three obituaries. Parents, spouses and children were depicted as perfect models of mutual devotion. Their relations were qualified by nouns such as adoration and love. Young men, dead in the flower of youth, were the pride of their family.⁹⁶ Young girls, who had graced their parents' home, would now grace "le parterre du Ciel".⁹⁷ And expatriates were described as returning periodically to Apt to taste the "ineffables douceurs de la vie familiale".⁹⁸

The family best demonstrated its cohesion in its confrontation with death. The unit closed in upon itself to console the members of the loss of a loved one. Death, as described by the obituaries, was a family affair, depicted, in the medieval sense, as the good death. Although many obituaries made only passing mention of the individual's last moments, other notices sketched more detailed descriptions of the setting which, in one case, seemed inspired by Greuze:

En quittant la terre, cette vertueuse mère de famille [Madon] a eu du moins la suprême et ineffable consolation de voir réunis, autour de son lit de souffrances, tous ses nombreux enfants . . . Sa main défaillante s'est levée une dernière fois pour les bénir et c'est en leur donnant rendez-vous au ciel qu'elle s'est éteinte dans leurs bras. Quel émouvant et sublime tableau! Tous ces enfants, autour d'une mère mourante, quelle magnifique couronne!⁹⁹

The social alienation that had projected the family into the forefront of the consciousness of a dispossessed élite can also be discerned in its attitude to death. The obituaries of the 1900s emphasize to a degree uncommon earlier both the savagery of death, portraying it as the unforeseen reaper carrying off the good Christian from a cruel world, and the magnitude of the reward, referring in concrete terms to an afterlife in which rendezvous was given and from which parents looked down on

95. Compare Robert DARTON's review of Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Towards Death: "Death's Checkered Past"*, *New York Review of Books*, 13 June 1964, pp. 11-14.

96. *Mercure*, 5 August 1906, Vanel, 94 lines; and 17 September 1905, Janselme, 12 lines.

97. *Mercure*, 23 July 1905, Mlle Madon, 39 lines, and 29 June 1907, Mlle Aymard, 29 lines.

98. *Mercure*, 16 August 1903, Illi, *curé* (Avignon), 27 lines, and 1 May 1904, Vidal, *officier* (St-Amand), 44 lines.

99. *Mercure*, 19 July 1903, Mme Madon, 105 lines.

their children. The imagery of death and the afterlife conveyed in the obituaries evoke Weber's hypothesis concerning the relation between elective sects and socially marginal classes for whom the promise of the afterlife provides a form of compensation for their social effacement.¹⁰⁰

Between 1840 and 1900 Apt experienced important changes in her social and economic structures. The transformation of her economy during the half-century under consideration led to a social renewal of the town reflected in the vision of the élite presented by the obituaries. In the mid-nineteenth century this élite, both by its social composition and its values, suggests a stable community dominated by old families. By the turn of the century this community appears unsettled and fluid. Despite the persistence of many values, there is sufficient change to underline the difficulties faced by the élite in reproducing itself.

Change in the vision of the élite also reflects a transformation of the *Mercure's* relation with its community. In the half-century examined, the *Mercure aptésien* became increasingly committed politically. In this commitment it offered some consistency, and one can educe from the obituaries the persistence of what André Siegfried has termed a "sensibilité politique". In the 1840s the *Mercure* was addressing a restricted and mainly non-partisan readership. Although a certain bias did manifest itself in the paper's depiction of the élite, a certain consensus, reinforced by the electoral system of the period, existed concerning the outlines of the élite, hiding the bias in the source. The élite defined itself by its possession of power.

This was no longer the case at the turn of the century. Indeed, with the notable exception of the mayor of Apt, the obituaries appearing in the *Mercure* do not isolate a group of people who could be said to constitute an uncontested local élite. Rather, they form, in the terminology of T. B. Bottomore,¹⁰¹ a political élite, that is, the dynamic and dominant elements of one of the contending political parties, proposed by the *Mercure aptésien* to its readership as worthy representatives of the clerical party. They were an "élite" which this readership could at the same time find appealing and identify with. Mass literacy, universal suffrage and the absence of politically coercive structures controlled by private individuals, implied that to survive a political élite could not be exclusive as it had been in the 1840s. Political strategy, thus, militated for the opening of the obituaries to as broad a cross section of society as possible. Clerical and conservative, the *Mercure aptésien* also became populist.

The changing content of the obituaries can then be attributed in part to a modification in the élite's exercise of power. From an élite exercising power to a dispossessed contending group, the difference was traumatic. To this, the language of the obituaries bear witness. But this dispossession cannot be explained with reference purely to local factors. Local élites, at least of the limited stature of that of Apt, were

100. Max WEBER, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston, 1964), p. 106.

101. T. B. Bottomore, *Élites and Society* (New York, 1964).

sponsored élites owing some of their power to their capacity to act as intermediary between their community and the state. The alternating municipal councils during the politically unsettled years of the 1870s demonstrates the existence in Apt as elsewhere of different "élites". Among these the nation-state, according to the vagaries of political fortunes, chose its intermediaries, if need be in defiance of local wishes. It is thus not surprising that the change in the themes of necrological notices should coincide with the renewal of political personnel in Paris accompanying the establishment of the Third Republic.¹⁰²

The study of the transformation of an élite's value system is pertinent not only to reflections upon change in political personnel. While it is true that much of the content of the obituaries, in particular the refuge in the family and in death, could represent a rejection of modern society, the alienation suggested in the notices may have been more of a reaction to political change than to social change. Despite some resistance to modernism, obituaries remain evidence of the accommodation by an old élite to ideas one could term new. In a France where Radical sheep are accused of wearing wolves' clothing to dissimulate their fundamental conservatism and where Radical politicians invariably drift to the right, the penetration of ideas, some of which are considered as forming the essence of Republican thought, into the body of values pertaining to a conservative élite is significant. This apparent partial adherence to the social model of an open society contrasts sharply with the behaviour of the German élite of the mining town of Bochum studied by David Crew.¹⁰³ It also suggests the inapplicability of socially static interpretations of nineteenth-century history, at least to southeastern France. Certainly, the findings undermine, at least for France, the claims upon which Arno Mayer has based his study of the evolution of nineteenth-century society.

In its conclusion then, this paper argues in favour of revision of the image of a conservative and relatively backward France at the eve of World War I. It has not pretended to address the question of economic development and social mobility as objective phenomena. Nonetheless, in bringing out the incapacity of a traditional élite to reproduce its values in their entirety, the study has demonstrated the importance of the penetration into its thinking of modern values.

102. Mattei DOGAN, "How to become a Cabinet Minister in France. Career Pathways, 1870-1978", *Comparative Politics*, XII (1979): 4.

103. CREW, "Definitions of Modernity", p. 67.